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# HISTORIC AMERICANS.

BY

THEODORE PARKER.

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BOSTON:

HORACE B. FULLER,

1878.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THESE lectures were prepared in 1858, for the Fraternity Course, which had been instituted that year. They were carefully elaborated, being written out in full, and partly rewritten with a view to publication. The lecture on Franklin was written over twice,\* — three times, in fact, though the last reproduction was rendered necessary by the loss of the original manuscript. But three of them, however, were delivered in Tremont Temple; and these were more than should have been attempted, for Mr. Parker was already so weak in this last autumn of his public service, that he made his way to the hall with difficulty, and barely sustained himself through the effort he was making.

The lectures are printed from faithful copies of his manuscript, with no more correction than was actually required by occasional omissions that had to be made

\* Weiss's Life of Parker, i. p. 432.

good, by very infrequent defects that were easily repaired, or by misplaced references, which, it is needless to say, were here, as elsewhere in Mr. Parker's writings, exceedingly few.

The lectures were prepared at a time when the anti-slavery agitation was at its height ; when, in Mr. Parker's judgment, it distinctly menaced war. The subject naturally occupies a large space in the biographies ; indeed, it furnished, probably, one of the motives for preparing them. That issue is dead. The war, to which the evil succumbed, broke out almost immediately after his decease, and accomplished by force what he hoped might be accomplished peacefully. A few passages, containing allusions to the ethics and politics of that by-gone epoch, would not be penned to-day ; but none will be sorry to read them who can weigh their importance as contributions to history, or can estimate their value as illustrations of character.

Mr. Parker's religious opinions were too vital to him to be excluded from any kind of discourse, and the reader of this volume may occasionally come across a phrase, or possibly a sentence, that will seem intrusive and objectionable. But such sentences and phrases are singularly rare, scarcely more frequent than the subject

demand, no more frequent than was demanded by his favorite method of treatment.

That method is simple, clear, and exhaustive. Mr. Parker never wrote without a direct purpose, and the purpose was always serious enough to engage the earnest exercise of his ability. When he selected the characters of Historic Americans as themes for the lyceum, his object was not, as with most lecturers it is, to amuse an audience for an hour; it was not to convey biographical information in a popular form; it was not to "do good" in a general sense; much less was it, in a specific sense, to do evil by affronting the reverence of his contemporaries, or diminishing the reputation of eminent men whom people far and near had lifted to a pedestal of honor. His design was to trace back to their sources, in the creative minds of the nation, the principles that have exerted a controlling influence in the nation's history, and are still active in the institutions and the politics of the hour. He would discuss great issues in a concrete form, showing how they were associated with character for better or worse.

A further intention he doubtless had, — such an intention as Mr. Everett had in the delivery of his oration on Washington, — to bring the power of great historic

names to bear on the minds of his contemporaries, to clear their conceptions, confirm their belief, or tone up their courage. Grand examples are more convincing than ordinary precepts, and Mr. Parker was intensely persuaded that our grandest examples were on the side that most needed strengthening.

But no side views of this sort tempted him to swerve a hair's breadth from the sternest loyalty to the truth. He made the truth serve his purpose when he could; but it was not his way to manufacture truth to suit his purpose, nor was it his way to judge truth by its utility for his private or public ends. The truth he would have at any rate, whether it would serve him or no. It would serve itself, which was better. He went always to original sources; but not content with that, he made effort to purge his own mental vision, in order that no discoloring or distorting feelings might make the truth seem to him other than it actually was. In all biographical studies his conscientiousness was a wonder. He laid on himself prodigious labor to satisfy it. Both hate and love were warned away from the canvas on which he was painting a character.

These four portraits are as faithful as he, by any labor of his, could make them. Those who question his truth-

fulness, must first revise their own. If in some respects the portraits look unlike the "counterfeit presentments" that are shown in the print shops, it must not be hastily concluded that he has intentionally disfigured them. He may possibly have restored features and lines which careless or too flattering copyists have misdrawn.

It will not be out of place here to correct the impression that Mr. Parker was a self-constituted image-breaker, who made iconoclasm a business, and delighted in shattering great reputations, as Cromwell's troopers did in mutilating statues of the saints. Of all the errors in regard to Mr. Parker, none are more completely errors than this, though others are more difficult to account for. In an age of false reverence, adulation, and sentimentalism, the man who tells the unadorned truth is a destroyer of idols. Such was Mr. Parker: an uncompromising idol-breaker. But he never broke the idol save with an intention to reveal the man. To know a character was, in his judgment, better than to worship a simulacrum. If any readers of this volume feel a passing emotion of regret as a cherished illusion here and there fades, they will rejoice at last in the solid human qualities that take their place, — the grand columns of virtue which belong to humanity, and support the State.

The truest compliment that can be paid to grand men, consists in the fearless judgment of their qualities, under the conviction that they will not only abide the test, but will be purified by it. What fancy loses reason gains. Were great men useful as ornaments in parlors, or as decorations in public halls, he would be their best delineator who set them off with most imposing effect. But so long as great men are needed as exemplars, he will have a claim on the world's gratitude who shows precisely what they exemplify. It is as important that we should know their foibles, as that we should know their strong points. The warning of their vices, if they had them, may be as useful as the encouragement of their virtues. What they seem to lose in being made to appear human, is more than compensated by the sympathy with their noblest brothers, which all men need to feel.

These lectures are published as they were written, in the hope of throwing light, not merely upon four majestic personages, but upon certain cardinal principles, far more majestic and far more worthy of veneration than they.

O. B. F.



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F R A N K L I N .

(11)



# FRANKLIN.

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AT the beginning of the last century a hardy man, Josiah Franklin by name, born in England, the son of a blacksmith, himself a tallow-chandler, was living in a small house, in an obscure way, in Boston, then a colonial town of eight or ten thousand inhabitants, in the colony of Massachusetts Bay.

On the 17th of January, at the Blue Ball, in Hanover Street, 1706,\* his tenth son was born into

\* See Drake's History and Antiquities of Boston, page 492. "Franklin himself told Mrs. Hannah M. Crocker, as she told me in 1828, that he was born at the sign of the Blue Ball, on the corner of Union and Hanover Streets, where his father then lived and carried on his business." Page 638, ib. "Mrs. Harriett A. T. Lewis, an intelligent and well-informed lady, well remembers hearing his birthplace spoken of by old persons when she was young, as a matter familiarly known to them; namely, that Franklin *was* born at the sign of the Blue Ball in Hanover Street, as has been stated." It is important to note these authorities, because a building in Milk Street is marked and is popularly known as "The Birthplace of Franklin." There were other Franklins in Boston before Josiah. Sparks's Franklin, i. 539; Mass. Rec. ii. p. 71, iii. p. 238.

this world, and, it being Sunday, he was taken to the meeting-house and publicly baptized the same day, according to the common custom of those times; for then it was taught by the ministers that the devil watched about every cradle, ready to seize the souls of all babies dying before they got ecclesiastically sprinkled with water, and that the ceremony of baptism would save them from his clutches until they could discern good from evil. The minister had a wig on his head, and Geneva bands about his neck. There was no Bible upon the desk of the pulpit, and he thought it a sin to repeat the Lord's Prayer. When he said, "This child's name is Benjamin," how all those grim puritanic Bostonians looked on the tenth boy, the fifteenth child of the tallow-chandler! and prudent aunts doubtless wondered what he would do with such a family in those hard times. That little baby, humbly cradled, has turned out to be the greatest man that America ever bore in her bosom or set eyes upon. Beyond all question, as I think, Benjamin Franklin had the largest mind that has shone this side of the sea, — widest in its comprehension, most deep-looking, thoughtful, far-seeing, of course the most original and creative child of the New World.

For the last four generations no man has shed such copious good influence on America; none added so much new truth to the popular knowl-

edge; none has so skilfully organized its ideas into institutions; none has so powerfully and wisely directed the nation's conduct, and advanced its welfare in so many respects. No man now has so strong a hold on the habits and manners of the people. Franklin comes home to the individual business of practical men in their daily life. His homely sayings are the PROVERBS OF THE PEOPLE now. Much of our social machinery, academic, literary, philosophic, is of his device.

WASHINGTON is a name that politicians snare the people with, that eulogists hold up to the world as without spot or blemish, and orators exhibit in order to make sure of rounds of applause. When I hear a politician refer to Washington I always expect slavery will follow next, though Washington hated slavery himself. His great merit was integrity — a virtue which he possessed in the heroic degree. His function was to create an army, and administer the government, both of which he did with self-devotion, ability, and faithfulness. This it is that makes him such a rare example in the history of mankind. His is a name that will be honored as long as men remember great deeds, or are proud and emulous of great virtue.

Let us now look this extraordinary BENJAMIN FRANKLIN in the face, and see what he was.

Here is a sketch which will show the geography and chronology of his life, a chart of his relation to time and space: —

He was born in Boston, on the 17th of January, 1706. Thence he ran away in the autumn of 1723, and in October found himself a new home in Philadelphia, where he made his first meal in the street one Sunday morning from a draught of Delaware River water and a pennyworth of bread, giving twopence worth to a poor woman.\* Such was his first breakfast and his earliest charity in his adopted state. Here he worked as a journeyman printer. Deceived by Keith, the Governor of Pennsylvania, he went to England, landing there the 24th of December, 1724. He followed his trade in London for about two years. He returned to Philadelphia on the 11th of October, 1726, and resumed his business as printer, entering also into politics; or, rather, I should say, he became a Statesman, for he was never a politician, but a Statesman from the beginning, who never solicited an office, nor used any indirection to retain one when it was in his possession. As agent for Pennsylvania, he again went to England in October, 1757, and returned to Philadelphia in November, 1762. But he went back to England

\* Sydney Smith says that "there would be many more good Samaritans if it were not for the *twopence* and the oil."



in December, 1764, as agent for several colonies, and returned thence, 5th of May, 1775. He was sent as minister to France by the revolted colonies in 1776, whence, on September 14, 1785, he returned to Philadelphia, which he never left again. He was President, or what we should now call Governor, of Pennsylvania, from October, 1785, to October, 1788, and was also a member of the Federal Convention, which made the Constitution of the United States. He died on the 17th April, 1790, aged eighty-four years and three months, and his body lies buried at Philadelphia, in the corner of the churchyard, close to the Quaker meeting-house.

Franklin spent a little more than twenty-six years in Europe, more than twenty-three of them in various diplomatic services. He lived in Boston nearly eighteen years, was a citizen of Philadelphia more than sixty-six years, held his first public office in 1736, and left office altogether in 1788, serving his state and nation in many public trusts something about fifty-two years. He was married in 1730, at the age of twenty-four. His wife died in 1774. He was forty-four years a husband, though for twenty-three years he was in Europe for the most part, while she remained wholly in Pennsylvania. He left two children, — an illegitimate son, named William Franklin, who afterwards became Governor of the colony of New Jersey, and was a tory, — and a

legitimate daughter, Sarah. Both of them married, and became parents long before his death. A few of his descendants are still living, though none, I think, bear the name of Franklin. Such is the material basis of facts and of dates.

To understand the man, look at the most important scenes in his public life.

I. A stout, hardy-looking boy, with a great head, twelve or fourteen years old, clad in knee breeches, with buckles in his shoes, is selling ballads in the streets of Boston, broadsides printed on a single sheet, containing what were called "VARSES" in those times. One is "The Lighthouse Tragedy," giving an account of the shipwreck of Captain Worthilake and his two daughters, and the other, "The Capture of Blackbeard the Pirate." He wrote the "varses" himself, and printed them also. "Wretched stuff," he says, they were: no doubt of it. From eight to nine he has been in the grammar school, but less than a year; then in another public school for reading and writing for less than another year — a short time, truly; but he made rapid progress, yet "failed entirely in arithmetic." In school he studied hard. Out of doors he was a wild boy, — "a leader among the boys," — and sometimes "led them into scrapes." After the age of ten he never saw the inside of a school-house as a pupil,

Harvard College was near at home, and the Boston Latin School close by, its little bell tinkling to him in his father's shop; but poverty shut the door in his face. Yet he would learn. He might be born poor, he could not be kept ignorant. His birth to genius more than made up for want of academic breeding. He had educational helps at home. His father, a man of middle stature, well set, and very strong, was not only handy with tools, but "could draw prettily." He played on the violin, and sang withal. Rather an austere Calvinist, a man of "sound understanding." Careless about food at table, he talked of what was "good, just, and prudent in the conduct of life," and not of the baked beans, the corned beef, or the rye and Indian bread. The father had a few books: Plutarch's "Lives," "Essays to do Good," by Cotton Mather, a famous minister at the "North End" of Boston, and besides, volumes of theological controversy and of New England divinity. Benjamin added some books of his own: Bunyan, Burton's Historical Collection; in all forty little volumes. He was fond of reading, and early took to writing poetry. Two children were born after him, making the family of the patriarchal number of seventeen. The father and mother \* were never sick. They died

\* His mother was the daughter of Peter Folger, "a godly and learned Englishman, of excellent common sense, and well educated in surveying," who had settled in Nantucket. This Peter Folger came out to America with the famous Hugh Peters in 1635, and with

of old age, as we ought; he at eighty-nine, she at eighty-five. The apple mellowed or shrivelled up, and then fell off. It did not rot inwardly. There was an uncle Benjamin, like the nephew in many things, who lived the other side of the water for a long time, and subsequently came here. Now and then he shot a letter to the hopeful Benjamin this side the sea, poetical sometimes, whereof some fragments still remain; one addressed to him when he was four years old, the other when he was seventeen; one warning him against military propensities, which the baby in long clothes was thought to have displayed, the other encouraging the poetic aspiration. In fact, the uncle Benjamin, like the nephew, had an inclination for "varses," and the specimens of his which are extant are not so bad as some "varses" that have been written since his time. When the nephew was seven years old, the uncle, hearing of his poetic fervor, wrote, —

" 'Tis time for me to throw aside my pen  
When hanging sleeves read, write, and rhyme like men.  
This forward spring foretells a plenteous crop,  
For if the bud bear grain, what will the top! " \*

Mary Morrell, who was a servant girl of Hugh Peters. Folger bought Mary of Peters for twenty pounds, and she became his wife. So the grandmother of Dr. Franklin was bought for twenty pounds out of white slavery. This on the authority of F. C. Sanford, of Nantucket.

\* Sparks's Franklin, 541. Also MS. vol. of Mr. Emmonds.

Benjamin had glimpses of academic culture, for the father wished to make him a minister, thus consecrating "the tithe of his sons." But poverty forbade. The boy *must* work. So, when he was ten years old, the tallow-chandler tried him with the dips and moulds of his own shop at the sign of the Blue Ball, then with the cutlery of his cousin Samuel, "bred to that trade in London;" but neither business suited him. These experiments continued for two years. Then, at the age of twelve, he was apprenticed to his brother James, a printer, afterwards an editor of the "NEW ENGLAND COURANT," the fourth newspaper published in America. James Franklin was a man not altogether respectable. During this apprenticeship Mr. Matthew Adams, a merchant, often lent Benjamin books, which he sat up the greater part of the night to read.

This is the boy who is hawking his own ballads about the streets of the little colonial town of Boston. This is the first scene in his public life. There is nothing remarkable in it, nothing very promising. He makes no public appearance in Boston again.

II. Next, in 1727, Franklin is a master printer on his own account, in his own hired house or shop in Market Street, Philadelphia. A white board over the door tells the world that "Benjamin Franklin, Printer," may be found there. He has just printed



his first job for five shillings. There are men now alive in 1860 who remember the sign right well. Since he left Massachusetts his life has been quite eventful. In Boston he wrote for his brother's newspaper, secretly at first, and afterwards openly. He was nominally its editor, and perhaps also its poet. He quarrelled with his brother James, ran away to Philadelphia, and has had a hard and tempestuous time of it. He did well as a journeyman printer in Philadelphia during his nineteenth and twentieth years. But the governor took notice of him, swindled him, and sent him to England on a fool's errand. Wherever he fell he touched ground with his feet. In London he followed his craft nearly two years, making friends and foes. He was a wild young man, and led himself into dissipations and difficulties. He deserted Miss Read, the young woman of Philadelphia to whom he was betrothed. He kept low company sometimes, not only of bad men, but of evil women also, "spending a good deal of his earnings at plays and at public amusements." In quite early life vices of passion left their stain on him, which he afterwards took great pains to wipe out. But even now, at twenty-one, he is industrious, temperate, frugal, forecasting, punctual, and that to an extraordinary degree. He works late and early, not disdaining to wheel home in a barrow the paper he bought for his trade. "He that would

thrive, must rise at five :” he knew it before he was twenty. He had read many books, nay, studied them ; the Spectator, the memorable things of Xenophon, Cocker’s Arithmetic, books on navigation, which helped him to a little geometry, Locke on the Understanding, Shaftesbury, Collins, with the ecclesiastical replies to the free-thinkers ; and in London he read many works not elsewhere accessible. He wrote, also, with simplicity, strength, and beauty, having taken great pains to acquire a neat and easy style. There is a diary of his, written when he was only twenty. He was now twenty-one. He soon became editor of the Pennsylvania Gazette, then bookseller, then almanac maker, then postmaster of Philadelphia, continuing always his printing trade. He had many irons in the fire, yet not one too many, for he was careful that none burned. He became connected with politics, and was on the side of the people, which is not often the popular side, and is seldom counted respectable. The change from the boy of fourteen, selling ballads in Boston, to the youth of twenty one, printing Quaker books, or to the mature man, printer and bookseller, is only a natural development.

III. Now he is forty-six years old. In June, 1752, attended by his son twenty-one years old, he is in the fields near Philadelphia as a thunder-cloud

comes up. He hoists a kite, covered with a silk handkerchief, an iron point at its head. He lets it fly towards the cloud. He holds by a short end of non-conducting silk the long string of hemp, a conductor of electricity. An iron key hangs at the joining of the silk with the hemp. He touches the key. The lightning of heaven sparkles in his hand. The mystery is solved. The lightning of the heavens and the electricity of the chemist's shop are the same thing. The difference is only in quantity; in kind they are the same. An iron point will attract the lightning. A string of hemp or wire will conduct it to the ground. Thunder has lost its destructive terror. The greatest discovery of the century is made, the parent of many more not dreamed of then or yet. Truly this is a great picture.

Between Franklin, the young printer of twenty-one, and Franklin, the philosopher, at forty-six, many events have taken place. The obscure printer of 1727 is now a famous man, inclining towards riches. He has had many social and civil honors. He has been justice of the peace (the title then meant something), afterwards alderman, clerk of the General Assembly, then member of the Assembly, then speaker, then postmaster of Philadelphia, then Postmaster-General of all the colonies. His Almanac has made him more widely known than any man in America; known to the rising democracy, respected and fol-



lowed, too, by the mass of the people. There are hundreds of families, nay, thousands, with only two books; one the Bible, which they read Sundays, and the other his "Poor Richard's Almanac," which they read the other six days of the week; and as its daily lessons are short, they are remembered forever. The Almanac seems to have perished in our time. So the leaves which grew on the Charter Oak, in Connecticut, a hundred years since, have all perished; but every crop of leaves left its ring all round the trunk. The Almanac has perished, but the wisdom of Franklin still lives in the consciousness and conduct of the people.

He has put his thought into Philadelphia, and in twenty-five years organized its municipal affairs, its education and charity, more wisely than any city in the world. He is in correspondence with the most eminent men of science in America, and has a name also with scientific men in England, France, Germany, and Italy. After the age of twenty-one he studied and learned Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, German, and very soon became able to read all these languages, which, at a later day, the scholars of so many nations used in bestowing praises on this printer-philosopher, who had snatched the lightning out of the sky, and had undertaken yet greater and more difficult works. The wonderful discovery is known all over Europe, and the two colleges of New

England, Yale leading the way, honor themselves by calling him Master of Arts. They adopt this runaway apprentice, this heretical tamer of lightning, into the company of their academic children. Soon the splendid colleges of all Europe confer their honors, transmit to him their medals, give him their diplomas, and hereafter it is "Dr. Franklin," and no longer plain "Mr. Benjamin." From the sale of the ballads to the rope of the lightning, some thirty years have passed, — a long step of time, but one by which he mounted very high.

IV. In 1776, in a small room at Philadelphia, there are five men draughting the Declaration of Independence, — Livingston from New York, Jefferson from Virginia, Franklin, Sherman, and John Adams, New England born, all three of them, Massachusetts boys, poor men's sons, who had fought their way to eminence; their birth to talent better than their breeding to academic culture. Behind them all stands Samuel Adams, another great man of Massachusetts, tall and valiant, also a poor man's son. Active and noiseless, he inspires the five companions for this great work, with his thought, and courage, and trust in God. These are the men who are making the Declaration of Independence. Virginia furnished the popular pen of Jefferson. Massachusetts the great ideas, the "self-evident truths," of the Dec-

laration itself. New to the rest of the world, they had been "Resolved" in the meetings of Boston, and in other obscure little New England towns. Household words they were to her, which our forefathers' pious care had handed down.

This is a wide prospect. A whole continent now opens before us.

The curtain is lifted high. You see the young nation in its infancy. "Hercules in his cradle," said Franklin; but with a legion of the mystic serpents about him. If the rising sun shines auspicious, yet the clouds threaten a storm, long and terrible.

In the interval from 1752 to 1776, between the act of "the thunderbolt of heaven," and that of "the sceptre of the tyrant," much has taken place. Franklin has been chosen member of the first Colonial Congress, which met at Albany in 1754, to protect the Provinces from the French and Indians. His far-reaching mind there planned the scheme of the Union for common defence among all the colonies. This the British government disliked; for if the colonies should form a Union, and the people become aware of their strength, they would soon want independence. Also Franklin has set military expeditions on foot; he and another young Buckskin, furnishing most of the little wisdom which went with General Braddock and his luckless troop. He has been a colonel in actual service, and done actual work,

too. He it was who erected the fortresses all along the frontier between the English and French possessions west of Pennsylvania. He had been sent to England as a colonial agent to remonstrate against the despotism of the proprietaries. He was also appointed agent for Georgia, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, and was commissioned to look after their rights, and protect them from the despotism of the King and Parliament. He was examined before the House of Commons in 1776, and gave admirable testimony as to the condition and character of the colonies, and as to the disposition and temper of America towards the Stamp Act. His cool, profound, and admirable statements, for the most part made without premeditation or anticipation of the questions proposed to him, astonished the English Parliament. "What used to be the pride of the Americans?" asked a questioner. "To indulge in the fashions and manufactures of Great Britain." "What is now their pride?" "*To wear their old clothes over again till they can make new ones.*" He found that some of the first men of Boston, Governor Hutchinson, Lieutenant Governor Oliver, and other Boston tories, "citizens of eminent gravity" in those times, had written official and private letters to a conspicuous member of Parliament, infamously traducing the Colony of Massachusetts, and pointing out means for destroying the liberties of all the colonies and

provinces, so as to establish a despotism here in America. He obtained these letters, private yet official, and sent them to a friend in Boston, Mr. Cushing, a timid man, speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.\* They were laid before the house and printed. Massachusetts, in consequence, sent a petition to the king, asking that these treacherous officers be removed from office. This righteous act, exposing the secret villany of officials, drew on Franklin the wrath of the New England Tories, and of the rulers of Old England. For this he was brought before the privy council of the King of England on January 29, 1774. A great array of famous men were in attendance, five and thirty lords and others. There Mr. Wedderburn, the king's Solicitor General, insulted him with such abuse as only such a man could know how to invent. Before this audience of five and thirty lords,† who were

\* Lord John Russell's correspondence of Fox, p. 124. Franklin got the Hutchinson and Oliver letters in 1774, from John Temple, who was a commissioner of customs of Boston. These letters were addressed to Thomas Whately, under Secretary of State, a private friend, but a private friend in office.

† For an account of this examination, see Dr. Bowring's Memoir of Jeremy Bentham, Chap. III. p. 59. On the 3d of May, 1774, Wedderburn (afterwards, in 1780, created Baron Loughborough, and Earl Rosslyn, in 1801) and Governor Hutchinson were burnt in effigy in the city of Philadelphia.

Wedderburn had called Franklin "a man of three letters," meaning "fur" (which signifies *thief*), and quoted from Zanga's speech



seated, did Franklin stand for two hours and listen to this purchased sycophant. "He has forfeited all the respect of societies and of men," said the courtier. "It is impossible to read his account expressing the cruellest and most deliberate malice, without horror." The councillors of England cheered this tin pedler of malignant rhetoric. But Franklin "stood conspicuously erect, without the smallest movement of any part of his body," and kept his countenance as immovable as if his features had been made of wood. He appeared on this day in a suit of Manchester velvet, which it was noticed he did not again wear in England.\* He was turned out of his office of Postmaster-General of the American colonies that very night.

in the play of the "Revenge." See Lord J. Russell's Correspondence of Fox, vol. i. p. 125.

\* The writer does not pursue the story of this suit of Manchester velvet, which it has been commonly understood was laid aside by Franklin, and was afterwards designedly worn by him when he came to sign the treaty of Peace at Paris, on the 30th November, 1782. In this he has followed the cautious and accurate Mr. Sparks, who discredits the authorities upon which Lord Brougham has adopted the story. (Vol. i. Sparks's Franklin, 488.) But now it seems to rest upon unquestionable authority, notwithstanding Mr. Sparks's disclaimer. Lord John Russell considers it must be true, because Lord St. Helens (the envoy of England who also signed the treaty) told the story to Lord Holland, and said that Franklin informed them of it "with a triumphant air"! Lord St. Helens could not speak of this without indignation. See also Bowring's Memoir of Bentham, Chap. III. p. 59.

This was the philosopher whom the learned academies of England, and of all Europe, had honored for taking the thunderbolt out of the sky ; now in that little room he is wrenching the sceptre from tyrants, making the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, for which alone Britain would give him a halter. More than twenty years before he had sought to establish a Union between the colonies ; now he seeks Independence. He would build up the new government on self-evident truths, that all men are created equal, each endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. He is an old man now, more than seventy years of age ; an old man, lame with the gout, but active, as the sun is active with light. He is the most popular man in America, the most influential man in the American Congress, — save only the far-seeing and unflinching Samuel Adams, — the greatest, the most celebrated, the most conciliating. It is a grand act, this moulding the progress of permanent and eternal principles, to form the American government. The world saw none grander in that century. There, for the first time in history, a nation laid the foundation of its state on the natural law that all governments shall uphold all men's right, not a few men's privilege.

V. Franklin, at Paris, is negotiating the treaty of

peace between America and Great Britain in 1783, in connection with John Adams, Jefferson, Laurens, and Jay. He accomplished the work, put an end to all hostility with England, and secured the acknowledgment of our independence. The war of eight sad years (1775–1783) was now over. They had been to him years of intense activity at the court of France, where he was not only American Minister, but Judge in Admiralty and Consul General, charged with many and very discordant duties. Seventy-seven years old, he now sets the seal of triumph on the act of the American people. What was only a Declaration in 1776, is now a fact fixed in the history of mankind. Washington was the Franklin of camps, but Franklin was the Washington of courts; and the masterly skill of the great diplomatist, the patience which might tire but which never gave out; the extraordinary shrewdness, dexterity, patience, moderation, and silence with which he conducted the most difficult of negotiations, are not less admirable than the coolness, intrepidity, and caution of the great general in his most disastrous campaign. Now these troubles are all over. America is free, Britain is pacific, and Franklin congratulates his friends. "There never was a good war or a bad peace;" and yet he, the brave, wise man that he was, sought to make the treaty better, endeavoring to persuade England to agree that there should be no more



temptation to privateering, and that all private property on sea and land should be perfectly safe from the ravages of war. But in 1783 Britain had not come nearer to it than the administration in America had in 1857. Franklin wished to do in 1783 what the wisest negotiators tried to accomplish in April, 1856, in the treaty of Paris.

VI. Franklin, an old man of eighty-four, is making ready to die. The great philosopher, the great statesman, he has done with philosophy and state craft, not yet ended his philanthropy. He is satisfied with having taken the thunderbolt from the sky, bringing it noiseless and harmless to the ground; he has not yet done with taking the sceptre from tyrants. True, he has, by the foundation of the American state on the natural and inalienable rights of all, helped to set America free from the despotism of the British king and Parliament. None has done more for that. He has made the treaty with Prussia, which forbids privateering and the war-like plunder of individual property on land or sea. But now he remembers that there are some six hundred thousand African slaves in America, whose bodies are taken from their control, even in time of peace — peace to other men, to them a period of perpetual war. So, in 1787, he founds a society for the abolition of slavery. He is its first President, and in that capacity signed a

petition to Congress, asking "the restitution of liberty to those unhappy men, who alone in this land of freedom are degraded into perpetual bondage;" asks Congress "that you will step to the very verge of the power vested in you for discouraging *every species of traffic in the persons of our fellow-men.*" This petition was the last public act of Franklin, the last public document he ever signed. He had put his hand to the Declaration of Independence; to the treaties of alliance with France and Prussia; to the treaty of peace with Great Britain; now he signs the *first* petition for the abolition of slavery.

Between 1783 and 1790 what important events had taken place! For three years he had been President of Pennsylvania, unanimously elected by the Assembly every time save the first, when one vote out of seventy-seven was cast against him. He had been a member of the Federal Convention, which made the Constitution, and, spite of what he considered to be its errors, put his name to it. Neither he, nor Washington, nor indeed any of the great men who helped to make that instrument, thought it perfect, or worshipped it as an idol. But now, as his last act, he seeks to correct the great fault, and blot, and vice of the American government—the only one which, in seventy-six years, has given us much trouble. The petition was presented on the 12th of February, 1790. It asked for the abolition of the

slave trade, and for the emancipation of slaves. A storm followed ; the South was in a rage, which lasted till near the end of March. Mr. Jackson, of Georgia, defended the "peculiar institution." The ancient republics had slaves ; the whole current of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, proved that religion was not hostile to slavery. On the 23d of March, 1790, Franklin wrote for the National Gazette the speech in favor of the enslavement of Christians. He put it into the mouth of a member of the Divan of Algiers. It was a parody of the actual words of Mr. Jackson, of Georgia, as delivered in Congress a few days before ; the text, however, being taken out of the Koran. It was one of the most witty, brilliant, and ingenious things that came from his mind. This was the last public writing of Dr. Franklin ; and, with the exception of a letter to his sister and one to Mr. Jefferson, it was the last line which ran out from his fertile pen, — written only twenty-four days before his death. What a farewell it was ! This old man, "the most rational, perhaps, of all philosophers," the most famous man in America, now in private life, waiting for the last angel to unbind his spirit and set him free from a perishing body, makes his last appearance before the American people as President of an abolition society, protesting against American slavery in the last public line he writes ! One of his wittiest and most ingenious works is a plea for the bondman,

adroit, masterly, short, and not to be answered. It was fit to be the last scene of such a life. Drop down the curtain before the sick old man, and let his healthy soul ascend unseen and growing.

Look, now, at the CHARACTER of Dr. Franklin. All the materials for judging him are not yet before the public, for historians and biographers, like other attorneys, sometimes withhold the evidence, and keep important facts out of sight, so as to secure a verdict which does not cover the whole case. There are writings of Franklin which neither the public nor myself have ever seen. Enough, however, is known of this great man to enable us to form a just opinion. Additional things would alter the quantity, not the kind. The human faculties, not pertaining to the body, may be divided into these four: the intellectual, the moral, the affectional, and the religious. Look at Franklin in respect to each of the four.

I. He had an intellect of a very high order, -- inventive, capacious, many-sided, retentive. His life covers nearly the whole of the eighteenth century. Ten years he was the contemporary of Leibnitz, twenty-one of Sir Isaac Newton. He was sixty-three years old when Alexander Humboldt and Cuvier were born. He embraced Voltaire. His orbit was intersected by that of Berkeley, Montesquieu, Hume, Kant, Priestley, Adam Smith. But in the eighty-

four years to which his life extended, I find no mind, which, on the whole, seems so great. I mean so generally able, various, original, and strong. Others were quite superior to him in specialities of intellect, — metaphysical, mathematical, and poetical. Many surpassed him in wide learning, of literature, or science, and in careful and exact culture; but none equalled him in general largeness of power, and great variety and strength of mind. In an age of encyclopædias, his was the most encyclopedic head in all Christendom. In the century of revolution, his was the most revolutionary and constructive intellect. He had no nonsense, was never eccentric. The intellectual faculties may be thus conveniently distributed: —

1. The understanding, the practical power, which seeks economic use as the end. 2. The imagination, the poetic power which seeks ideal beauty as the end. 3. The reason, the philosophic power, which seeks scientific truth as the end, which is parent alike of use and beauty, the Martha and Mary of the family. Franklin had a great understanding, a moderate imagination, and a great reason. He could never have become an eminent poet or orator. With such, the means is half the end. He does not seem to have attended to any of the fine arts, with the single exception of music. He was not fond of works of imagination, and in his boyhood he sold Bunyan's



Pilgrim's Progress to buy Burton's Historical Collections. Perhaps he underrated the beautiful and the sublime. I do not remember, in the ten volumes of his writings, a line containing a single reference to either. This defect in his mental structure continually appears in his works and in his life. Hence, there is a certain homeliness and lack of elegance in his writings, and sometimes a little coarseness and rudeness. Hence, also, comes the popular judgment that he was not a high-minded man. Kant, Kepler, Descartes, Leibnitz, Schelling, were men of great imagination, which gives a particular poetic charm to their works that you do not find in the Saxon philosophers. Bacon, Locke, Newton, Adam Smith, were men of vast ability, but not imaginative or poetic. Franklin thinks, investigates, theorizes, invents, but never does he dream. No haze hangs on the sharp outline of his exact idea to lend it an added charm. Besides this immense understanding, Franklin had an immense reason, which gave him great insight and power in all practical, philosophic, and speculative matters. He was a man of the most uncommon common sense. He saw clearly into the remote causes of things, and had great power of generalization to discuss the universal laws, the one eternal principle, or the manifold and floating facts. He did not come to his philosophic conclusions and discoveries by that poetic imagination which creates

hypothesis after hypothesis, until some one fits the case ; nor did he seem to reach them by that logical process which is called induction. But he rather perfected his wonderful inventions by his own simple greatness of understanding and of reason, a spontaneous instinct of causality, which led him to the point at once. He announced his discoveries with no parade. He does the thing, and says nothing about it, as if it were the commonest thing in the world. His simplicity appears not only in his manners and in his life, but also in his intellectual method. Accordingly, he was a great inventor of new ideas in science, the philosophy of matter, and in politics, the philosophy of States ; in both running before the experience of the world. If only his philosophic writings had come down to us, we should say, "Here was a mind of the first order, — a brother of Leibnitz, Newton, Cuvier, Humboldt." If nought but his political writings were preserved, his thoughts on agriculture, manufactures, commerce, finance, the condition and prospect of the colonies, the effect of certain taxes on them, the historical development of America and her ultimate relation to England, then we should say, "Here was one of the greatest political thinkers of the age or of the world." For while he anticipated the scientific discoveries of future philosophers, he does the same in the departments of the politician and the statesman. He

understood easily the complicated affairs of a Nation, and saw clearly the great general laws which determine the welfare of the individual or of the State. Yet he made occasional mistakes; for the swift forethought of genius, on the whole, is not so wise as the slow experience of the human race. Nobody is as great as everybody. Constructive as well as inventive, he was a great organizer. He knew how to make his thought a thing, to put his scientific idea into matter, making a machine, his social idea into men, creating an institution. He could produce the maximum of result with the minimum outlay of means. His contrivances, mechanical and social, are many and surprising. He improved the printing press, invented stereotyping, and manifold letter-writers. He cured smoky chimneys of their bad habits. He amended the shape and the rig of ships. He showed the sailors how they might take advantage of the Gulf Stream to shorten their eastward transit of the Atlantic, and how to steer so as to avoid it on the westward passage. He told them how a few men might haul a heavy boat, and how they might keep fresh provisions at sea. He suggested improvements in the soup-dishes of sailors, and in the water-troughs of horses. He introduced new kinds of seeds, grass, turnips, broom-corn, curious beans from England, vines from France, and many other vegetables and plants. He drained lands skilfully,



and gathered great crops from them. He reformed fireplaces, and invented the Franklin stove. First of all men he warmed public buildings. He had a fan on his chair, moved by a treadle, so as to drive away the flies. He made him spectacles, with two sets of glasses, for far and near sight. He invented a musical instrument, and improved the electrical machine. He discovered that lightning and electricity are the same, proving it in the simplest and deepest and most satisfactory manner, by catching the actual lightning. He first discerned the difference between positive and negative electricity.

He taught men to protect buildings from lightning, and would use electricity to kill animals without pain, and to make tough meat tender and digestible. "There are no bounds," says he, in 1751, "to the force men may raise and use in the electrical way; for little may be added to little, *ad infinitum*, and so accumulated, and then, afterwards, discharged "together at once." He invented a phonographic alphabet, which does not now look so strange as in 1768. He improved the wheels of carriages, the form of wind-mills and water-mills, and the covering of roofs. First of all men, he induced the citizens of Philadelphia to construct foot pavements (which we call sidewalks), and to place crossing-stones in their most frequented streets. In London, he first proved that streets could be swept in dry weather as well as hoed

and scraped in wet weather. He demonstrated this fact, by hiring an old woman to sweep the street in front of his house. Thus this Yankee printer taught the Londoners a useful lesson, now universally known.

At the age of twenty-two, in 1728, Franklin founded the first American Club for mutual improvement. It was called a "Junto." In 1744 he was the founder of "the American Philosophical Society," the first scientific association on this continent. He established, in 1751, the first American free school outside of New England, and he originated the first social library in the world. He organized the first fire company in America, and the first night-watch in Philadelphia. In 1741 he started the first magazine in America, — the General Magazine, — the forerunner of the North American, Examiner, New England Review, and a great host more. In the Quaker State of Pennsylvania, in 1744, he first organized the military force, getting ten thousand subscribers to maintain a volunteer militia. The women provided silken banners, which Franklin supplied with appropriate mottoes. He was himself colonel of the Philadelphia regiment.

He first enrolled men for the military defence of the Quaker city, in 1744, when Spanish pirates came up the river, and threatened to burn the town. He planned the admirable military organization for the whole colony of Pennsylvania, in 1754, for defence

against the French and Indians, and in 1755 furnished the commissariat trains of General Braddock. He first proposed the union of all the provinces, in 1754, and in 1775 he first made the plan of a confederacy of them all, which could not be adopted till 1778, though then with improvements. Such was the distracted condition of all things in America at that time, that this organizing skill seemed most of all things needful; and Franklin's great power was not only in invention, but in organization quite as much. He had a genius for creation and administration. He easily saw what things belonged together, and found the true principle which would make many coalesce and become an association, affording freedom to each individual, and social unity to all.

Yet his plan for the Constitution of the State of Pennsylvania did not work well; nor would his scheme, that the Federal officers should serve without salary, have proved to be desirable or practicable. His design for the excitement of the ambition of children at school I think was a great mistake. If he had lived in 1857, instead of in 1776, he would not have left a hundred pounds to be expended in medals of silver or gold, which, while they stir the ambition of few, dishearten and discourage many, and leave heart-burnings amongst all. He could not foresee what it is no merit in schoolmasters and

schoolmistresses to perceive after him. He founded many societies, which still continue, and his schemes have been extended far and wide. The people understood this genius for all kinds of practical and social arrangement, and put his name to many institutions of which he was but remotely the founder. Churches are called after Paul, Peter, James, John, but fire companies, debating societies, book clubs, libraries, hospitals, and the like, are named for Franklin. Institutions for theology have the name of theologic apostles, but institutions for humanity bear the name of this great apostle of benevolence. Administrative as well as constructive, he was a most able manager. He knew how to deal with men, leading them to accept his conclusions, and accomplish his purposes. Here he was helped by his great shrewdness and knowledge of the world, and also by his admirable geniality and kindness of manner, good-humor, mirth, and reserve. He did not drive men, but led them, and that often with a thread so delicate that they did not see it. He did not affect to lead, but only to follow. So the wise mother conducts her refractory boy to school for the first time, not dragging him by the hand or by the ear, and hauling him there, school-mother fashion, but by throwing something forward, and letting little Master Wilful run and pick it up; then varying the experiment, and so conquering without a battle.

He knew

“Men should be taught as if you taught them not,  
And things unknown proposed as things forgot.”

He took care not to wound the vanity of men, or hurt their self-esteem, by exhibiting his own immense superiority of knowledge, insight, and skill. He had tact, — that admirable art of hitting the nail on the head at the first strike, and not bruising the fingers while it is driven home. He was one of the most adroit of diplomatists, fully equal to the European practitioners, whose fathers, from generation to generation, had been accustomed “to lie abroad for the advantage of their country.” Candid and open with the honest, none knew better than he how to manage a cunning man. He knew how to conciliate. When others made a speech, he told a story, or invented a parable, and so cheaply drew the thunder out of the hostile cloud. If he could not help knowing the faults of the men he was obliged to work with, he forbore from letting them see what he knew.\* He could speak at the right time, none more silvery; but he knew when silence was golden, and had a wise reserve. Hence

\* Jefferson declared that the charge against Franklin of subserviency to France “had not a shadow of foundation,” and “that it might truly be said that they [the government of France] were more under his influence than he under theirs. Randall’s Jefferson, vol. iii. p. 449, note.



he was often thought to dissemble and feign, because he said nothing. He knew how to work, and when to wait. When his iron was cold he heated it, and only struck it when it was hot; and he could make his chimney burn its own smoke.

Singularly modest, he claimed very little for himself of merit, honor, or originality. He let others, when it helped the common cause, use his political or philosophical thought as if it were common property, or the private estate of any claimant; knowing, as he said, that it would all come right in the end, without his wasting any words now. With abundance of private enemies, he had no private quarrels, which it always takes two to make. Calumnies against him he left time to answer. Where are they now? Assaulted by some of the wildest, craftiest, and most insidious, he never broke a private friendship. Some he convinced, some he wooed, others he gently drew, and some he took up in his great fatherly arms, and carried, and kissed, and set them down just where he would. He quarrelled only with the public enemies of his country, but took the mildest ways of allaying trouble. When the Constitutional Convention was excited and inharmonious, Franklin suggested that their meetings should be opened with prayers. And so he shed oil on the troubled waters, and all tumult ceased. He knew how to use the auspicious moment, and to make hay

while the sun shone. All men have fits of easy benevolence. He could take advantage of them.

Thus he procured the cannon from Governor Clinton, of New York, for the armament of the fort below Philadelphia, against a threatened invasion of French and Spaniards. Franklin, Colonel Lawrence, Messrs. Allen and Taylor, were sent to New York to borrow cannon of Governor Clinton. At first the governor met them with a flat refusal. But after a dinner, where there was great drinking of Madeira wine, he softened by degrees, and said he would lend six. After a few more bumpers he advanced ten, and at length he very good-naturedly granted eighteen. They were fine cannon, eighteen pounders, with their proper carriages, and were soon transported, and mounted on the fort.

In like manner, seizing the opportunity when the news of General Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga reached Paris, he at once made the treaty of alliance between the United States of America and France. It could not have been done a moment sooner.

II. Franklin's moral powers were certainly great; his moral perceptions quick, distinct, and strong. His moral character was high, though by no means without defects. He uniformly sought justice in the relation between nation and nation, government and people, man and man, and did not stop at the letter of treaties and statutes, or at habits and customs never

so old, but went back to the natural rights of man. He loved peace, public and private, and hated all that was sectional and personal. He was the enemy of all slavery, called by whatever political or ecclesiastical name. Yet his moral sense does not appear to have been so active as were his affections and intellect in his early days. This is not uncommon. The faculty of conscience which sees the eternal right, is often dormant at the beginning of life. Hence he made "*errata*," as he technically calls them, which he afterwards pointed out himself, that he might warn others. He stumbled many times in learning to walk, and, as he was a tall youth, and moved fast, so he fell hard. At the last there is a little lack of that nice womanly delicacy which you find in a moral character of the very highest elevation. His was the morality of a strong, experienced person, who had seen the folly of wise men, the meanness of proud men, the baseness of honorable men, and the littleness of great men, and made liberal allowances for the failures of all men. If the final end to be reached were just, he did not always inquire about the provisional means which led thither. He knew that the right line is the shortest distance between two points, in morals as in mathematics, but yet did not quarrel with such as attained the point by a crooked line. Such is the habit of politicians, diplomats, statesmen, who look on all men as a com-



mander looks on his soldiers, and does not ask them to join the church or keep their hands clean, but to stand to their guns and win the battle.

Thus, in the legislature of Pennsylvania, Franklin found great difficulty in carrying on the necessary measures for military defence because a majority of the Assembly were Quakers, who, though friendly to the success of the revolution, founded contrary to their principles, refused to vote the supplies of war. So he caused them to vote appropriations to purchase bread, flour, wheat, *or other grain*. The Governor said, "I shall take the money," for "I understand very well their meaning, — other grain is gunpowder." He afterwards moved the purchase of a fire-engine, saying to a friend, "Nominate me on the committee, and I will nominate you; we will buy a great gun, which is certainly a fire-engine; the Quakers can have no objection to that."

Such was the course of policy that Franklin took, as I think, to excess; but yet I believe that no statesman of that whole century did so much to embody the eternal rules of right in the customs of the people, and to make the constitution of the universe the common law of all mankind; and I cannot bestow higher praise than that on any man whose name I can recall. He mitigated the ferocities of war. He built new hospitals and improved old ones. He first

introduced this humane principle into the Law of Nations, that in time of war,\* private property on land shall be unmolested, and peaceful commerce continued, and captive soldiers treated as well as the soldiers of the captors. Generous during his lifetime, his dead hand still gathers and distributes blessings to the mechanics of Boston and their children. True it is that

“Him only pleasure leads and peace attends,  
Whose means are pure and spotless as his ends.”

\* In the treaty of 1783, between the United States and Prussia, the following was the twenty-third article, prepared by Franklin:—

“If war should arise between the two contracting parties, the merchants of either country, then residing in the other, shall be allowed to remain nine months to collect their debts and to settle their affairs, and may depart, freely carrying off all their effects without molestation or hinderance. And all women and children, scholars of every faculty, cultivators of the earth, artisans, manufacturers, and fishermen, unarmed and inhabiting unfortified towns, villages, or places, and in general all others whose occupations are for the common subsistence and benefit of mankind, shall be allowed to continue their respective employments, and shall not be molested in their persons, nor shall their houses and goods be burnt or otherwise destroyed, nor their fields wasted by the armed force of the enemy, into whose power by the events of war they may happen to fall. But if anything is necessary to be taken from them for the use of such armed force, the same shall be paid for at a reasonable price.

“And all merchant and trading vessels employed in exchanging the products of different places, and thereby rendering the necessaries, conveniences, and comforts of human life more easy to be obtained, and more general, shall be allowed to pass free and unmolested, and neither of the contracting powers shall grant or issue any commis-

But it is a great thing in this stage of the world to find a man whose *ends* are pure and spotless. Let us thank him for that.

In his private morals there were doubtless great defects, and especially in his early life much that was wrong and low. His temperament inclined him to vices of passion. He fell the way he leaned, and caught an abiding stain from his intrigues with low women. His desertion of his betrothed, Miss Read, who afterwards became his wife, was unjustifiable

sion to any private armed vessels, empowering them to take or destroy such trading vessels, or interrupt such commerce."

See also WASHINGTON'S letter to COUNT DE ROCHAMBEAU, 31st July, 1786, as follows:—

"The treaty of amity, which has lately taken place between the King of Prussia and the United States, marks a new era in negotiation. It is the most liberal treaty which has ever been entered into between independent powers. It is perfectly original in many of its articles, and, should its principles be considered hereafter as the basis of connection between nations, it will operate more fully to produce a general pacification than any measure hitherto attempted amongst mankind."

Napoleon III., 7th August, 1858, on the occasion of the opening of the docks at Cherbourg, when the statue of Napoleon I. was uncovered, said, "*Une des questions pour lequel il avoit lutté le plus energiquement, la liberté des mers, qui consacre le droit des neutres, est aujourd'hui resolue d'un commun accord, tant il est vrai que la posterité se charge toujours de realiser les idées d'un grand homme.*"

Notwithstanding this great authority, we will still claim for Franklin the honor of first propounding this doctrine of the freedom of the seas, and the notion itself as one of our Yankee "ideas."

and mean. At the age of twenty-four he sought to negotiate a matrimonial engagement with a very deserving young woman. He demanded with her a portion of one hundred pounds, and required her father to mortgage his house to raise the money. The bargain was broken off, and the woman in question soon became the wife of another. He then made overtures of marriage in other quarters, but soon found that "the business of a printer being generally thought to be a poor one," he was not to expect money with a wife that was worth taking without. At length he married his former love, Miss Deborah Read, whom he had deserted more than six years before. I make no excuse for these things, and shall not call twelve a score when it is only a dozen. His conduct in these respects was mean and low. But it is Franklin who tells us these things against himself, and gives a conscientious list of "errata." What other American ever thus volunteered evidence to condemn himself? He diligently corrected his "errata" at a later day, and if the Sun of Righteousness did not shine bright in his morning hours, it yet made for him a long clear day. True, he was set free from the youthful bias of passion; but of the worser vices of ambition, vanity, covetousness, self-esteem, envy, revenge, malice, I find no trace in all his writings, or in those of his many enemies. Though he was terribly tried

by Dr. Arthur Lee, and by John Adams, I cannot remember a single revengeful or envious word that he ever wrote in all his numerous writings, public and private. He hated George III.; and it must be confessed that, if that were a failing in an American, it yet "leaned to virtue's side." One of the wittiest of men, his feathered shaft was never pointed with malice, not a word has come from his laughter or scorn at the expense of his private foes. I find in him no inordinate love of power, or of office, or of money, and not the smallest desire for show or distinction. He laughed at his own vanity. None else could find it to laugh at. At the period of his early life, men in Boston and Philadelphia, whose only distinction was that they were worth five or six thousand pounds, and were residents in provincial towns of ten or twenty thousand inhabitants, mocked at this printer, the son of a tallow-chandler, and spoke of his "mechanic rust." "Contempt pierces the hide of the rhinoceros," says the proverb. Franklin remembered this, and thus began his last will and testament: "I, Benjamin Franklin, printer, late Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States of America to the court of France, now President of the State of Pennsylvania, do make and declare this my last will and testament," &c.\* He had no little resentments; he forgave his enemies, as few States-

\* Sparks's Franklin, i. 599.



men and few Christians do, except in formal prayers, where it costs nothing and leads to nothing. He was publicly generous, even to his country's foes. Mr. John Dickinson was Franklin's bitterest enemy in Pennsylvania. He had written a special book against British grievances, the "Farmer's Letters," while Franklin was agent in London. Franklin reprinted the book, introducing it by an excellent preface written by himself, thus overcoming evil with good, and doing good to those who persecuted him. Franklin had a strong will. All great men have; but it was not invasive or aggressive. It cut not other wills asunder. His large stream, swift and deep, kept its own banks, and did not overslaugh another's land. He would go to his purpose by your road. He was inflexible for principles and for ends, but very conciliating and accommodating as to means and methods; never obstinate. He could bend his own will, but not suffer it to be broken. Moderate, just, persistent, now open, now reserved, he accomplished the liberation of his country. Yet he was often thought to be loose, irregular, not to be relied upon, indifferent, and false to his country. He had no puritanic asceticism. His morals were wider than Boston, wider than New England.

III. Franklin was eminently an affectionate man. He had a wonderful benevolence, and was even greater in this than in philosophy or politics. He was full

of loving-kindness and tender mercy. This affectionate benevolence was not merely a principle, it was quite as much the instinct of a kindly nature. You find it in his earliest writings, those written before he was twenty-one years old. He was continually doing good in the most practical way. He took care of his poor relations, some of whom, of course, repaid him not with gratitude, but with perpetual grumblings and complainings. Franklin, like all men, found that gratitude was no common virtue. He attempted to improve the condition of sailors, soldiers, prisoners of war, servants, housekeepers, farmers, and the rest of mankind. He had many friends, making them easily, and retaining them long. His correspondence with them is full of beautiful and tender love. Witness his letters to Priestley, Vaughan, Bishop Shipley, Hartley, Whately, Jared Eliot, and the numerous ladies to whom he delighted to talk with pen or lip. Flowers of endearment bloom in his private letters — wild, natural, and attractive. Even in his public documents wayside blossoms of affection will spring up. Literature records the writings of few men that were so genial. I think no man in the world ever set on foot so many good works of practical benevolence. He sowed the seed in Philadelphia, and thence the plants spread over all the Northern States. In his private capacity he looked after the aged, the sick,



and the poor. He tried to protect the Indians. He would have liberated the slaves. In his high diplomatic office he sought to confine the ravages of war to public property, and to the actual soldiers in the field. Franklin was the universal Good Samaritan. When he first set his foot in Philadelphia he gave twopence worth of bread to a poor woman, and his last act was of the same character.

IV. It has often been said that Franklin had no religion. Even the liberal Mr. Sparks thinks it is to be regretted that he did not bestow more attention to the evidences of Christianity.\* Mr. Sparks did not mean that he neglected the evidences of God's existence or of man's duty, or that Franklin required to be convinced of the need of honesty, truth, piety, morality, reverence, love to God, and the keeping of his laws. Many have called him not only negatively irreligious, but positively anti-religious and atheistic. Here all rests on a definition.

First, if religion be a compliance with the popular ecclesiastical ceremonies, then Franklin had little religion, for in his boyhood he did not frequent the meeting-houses or churches much, but spent his only leisure day in reading and writing; in his manhood he had little to do with church forms.

Second, if religion be a belief in the standard doc-

\* Sparks's Franklin, i. 517.

trines of the ecclesiastical theology, — the Trinity, the fall, total depravity, the atonement, the invincible wrath of God, eternal hell, the damnation of men or of babies, the miraculous Revelation of the Old Testament and the New, the miracles of famous men, Jews, Gentiles, or Christians, — then Franklin had no religion at all; and it would be an insult to say that he believed in the popular theology of his time, or of ours, for I find not a line from his pen indicating any such belief.

Third, if religion be fear, whining, creeping through the world, afraid to use the natural faculties in the natural way; if it be hatred of such as think differently from the mass of those who do not think at all, but only hear and believe; if it be to damn men because they say there is no damnation; then Franklin had no religion at all, but was positively anti-religious and atheistic. For he stood up straight, like a man on his own feet, and walked manfully forward, daring to think and to tell what he thought himself, leaving others to think also for themselves, having a manly contempt for all bigotry, all narrowness, yet not hating the bigot. But if religion be to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; if it be to love God with all the mind, and heart, and soul, and one's neighbor as one's self; if it be to forgive injuries, to do good to all men, to protect the needy, clothe the

naked, instruct the ignorant, feed the hungry, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, to lift up the fallen, to break the rod of the oppressor and let the oppressed go free, and at heart to endeavor to keep one's self unspotted from the world; then what statesman, what man, what Bishop of that time, was his equal? Nay, bating the errors he has himself pointed out in his life, in what was he behind the very chiefest of the apostles? If such things as he practised make a man a Christian, then Franklin must stand high on the list. If they do not, then it is of no consequence who is called Christian, or Pagan, or Turk.

In boyhood he published some opinions, which he afterwards thought foolish. He had the manhood to be sorry for it, to say so, and to recall the little tract, the only printed thing of his that I have not seen. For a philosopher in that age he had a singularly devout spirit, and took pains to improve the form of worship, making a new translation of the Lord's Prayer, and publishing a modified edition of the Book of Common Prayer of the English Church; there is a little volume of prayers still in manuscript, which Franklin made for his own use. He was on intimate terms with Priestley, one of the most able men of that age; with Shipley, an English bishop; with Dr. Price, a Welch dissenter; with Jared Eliot, a Connecticut Calvinist; with Ezra Styles, another

of the same stamp, who calls himself "the most unworthy of all the works of God;" and with Whitefield, the great Methodist orator. He had no asceticism, no cant; he did not undertake to patronize the Deity. He was benevolent, cheerful, honest, reverential, full of trust in God. I do not mean to say that I like, in a religious point of view, everything that I find in his writings. Now and then there is a tone of levity which sounds ill. I do not think he meant it ill. Franklin has a bad reputation among ministers and in churches. You see why. Because he had natural religion; because he revered that, and trusted God more than he feared man. If he had done as Mr. Polk did, — sent for a minister on his death-bed, and declared that all his righteousness was as filthy rags; that he had not any faith in human nature, but through means of miracles and atonement, — then Franklin's praise would have been sounded from one end of the land to the other. And if he had said, "Brethren, slavery is all right; here is the Old and New Testament for it," the whole church of America, and its ministers from the Penobscot to the Sacramento, from the Lake of the Woods clear down to Lake Nicaragua, would have been praising him to this day. Instead of these things, Franklin said, "If I should escape shipwreck, I should not build a church, but a light-house."

As it is, Franklin and Washington must be content

to have possessed the greatest of human virtues in the heroic degree, and to endure a bad name from the American clergy. Franklin had the substance of religion, such as Jesus said should be rewarded in the kingdom of heaven with a "Well done, good and faithful servant," an "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me." \*

Great man as he was, he saw not all the evils of his own time. He owned a slave in 1758, named "Billy," who ran away from him in England, but was soon found under the protection of a lady, who was proud of making him a Christian, and contributing to his education and improvement. She had sent him to school. He was taught to read and write, to play the violin and French horn. Franklin says, "Whether she will be willing to part with him, or can persuade Billy to part with her, I know not." Yet in 1760 he became one of the trustees of Rev. Dr. Bray's admirable association for the instruction of negroes.†

But it must be considered that slavery, in 1758, was a very different thing from what it is in 1859. It was by no means the cruel and malignant thing that it now is. In the Constitutional Convention he consent-

\* As to his religious opinions, see Sparks's Franklin, i. 514; x. 422-425.

† Sparks's Franklin, vii. pp. 201, 202.



ed to the continuance of slavery in the Union. I do not find that he publicly opposed the African slave-trade. At that time he was the greatest man on the Continent of America, possessing and enjoying great respect, great popularity and influence throughout the country. Had he said, "There must be no slavery in the United States. It is unprofitable; it conflicts with our interests, social, educational, commercial, moral. It is unphilosophical, at variance with the first principles set forth in our Declaration of Independence. It is in conflict with the very objects of the Constitution, and incompatible with the political existence of a republic. Moreover, it is wicked, utterly at war with the eternal law which God has written in the constitution of man and of matter. It must, by all means, be put down:"—had he said these things, what would have happened? Washington would have been at his side, and Madison and Sherman, with the States of New England and of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. On the other hand, Virginia and North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, might have gone and been annexed to England or Spain. But, instead of four millions of negro slaves, and instead of slave ships fitting out in New York and Baltimore, and the Federal Government at Boston playing genteel comedy at the slave-trader's trial, what a spectacle of domestic government should we have had! What national pros-

perity ! But Franklin spoke no such word. Did he not think ? Did he fear ? Judge ye who can. To me, his silence there is the great fault of his life. It was the hour of the Nation's trial. Even he could not stand the rack. No man is so good as all men. No experience is so wise as time.

Yet Franklin had his little inconsistencies. In his Poor Richard's Almanac he said, "Lying rides on debt's back," and "Pay as you go." But it must be told, "Benjamin Franklin, printer," ran in debt at the grocer's, and the debt accumulated from year to year. It was two pounds in 1731 ; nine pounds in 1736 ; and twenty-six pounds in 1750. Some of the items are curious. "A fan for Debby," his wife, two shillings ; a "beaver hat" for himself, two pounds ; dressing an old hat for his son, two shillings. He talked against luxury ; but in 1758 he sent home sixteen yards of floweret tissue, which cost nine guineas, or about fifty dollars, for a dress for his wife. And for his daughter he sends a pair of buckles, which cost three guineas. Also he purchased a "pair of silk blankets, very fine," taken by a privateer, and also "a fine jug for beer." Said he, "I fell in love with it at first sight, for I thought it looked like a fat, jolly dame, clean and tidy, dressed in a neat blue and white calico gown, good-natured and lovely ; and it put me in mind of — somebody."\* But he was

\* Sparks's Franklin, vii. 164.



wealthy then, and the country prosperous. In different times he had sterner practices.\*

No man ever rendered so great services to American education. They began forty years before the Revolution, and are not ended yet. His newspapers and pamphlets were of immense value to the cause of humanity; for he was able, wise, just, and benevolent. At twenty years of age, he wrote as well as Addison or Goldsmith. His English is fresh, idiomatic, vigorous, and strong, like the language of Dean Swift. His style is direct and often beautiful as a fringed gentian in the meadows of September. He had great skill in making an abstract style popular. He reduced many things to a common denominator, that is to say, to their lowest terms, and so he made them easy for all to handle and comprehend, having in this respect the rare excellence of Socrates and Bacon. Believing sincerity to be the last part of eloquence, he has not left a line of sophistry in his ten volumes. For twenty-five years he published, annually, ten thousand copies of "Poor Richard's Almanac," full of thrifty maxims and virtuous counsel. It was one of the most valuable allies of the Nation. For it made popular throughout the Nation that thrift which enabled Congress to keep the Revolutionary army together for nearly seven years. I

\* See the admirable letter to Sarah, 3d June, 1774, Sparks's Franklin, viii. 373.

have often thought that the battles of the Revolution could not have been fought between 1775 and 1783 had not the Almanac been published from 1730 to 1755. It was the People's classic volume, hanging in the kitchens from the Penobscot to the Alleghany Mountains, and from Buffalo Creek to the mouth of the Savannah River. It was the Bible of the shop and of the barn. Poor Richard became the American saint, especially the saint of New England, — a saint devoted to the almighty dollar.

His scientific labors were for the Human Race. Yet science was only an incident in his life, which was devoted intensely to practical studies. In his early days he had no training in school or college, but he had a nature that was more college than the university that could not let him in. He had no acquaintance with the higher mathematics, nor any companionship with learned men until his great discoveries were all made. The magnificent works of Newton, Leibnitz, Haller, Blumenbach, Priestley, Cuvier, Von Humboldt, fill me with less surprise than the grand generalizations of Franklin, made with no help from society or from any intellectual atmosphere about him, and in the midst of laborious duties. He pursued science under the greatest of difficulties, and how magnificent were the prizes that he won!

Franklin's diplomatic labors in England before the

Revolution, and during its period at Paris, were of immense value. Whenever the Revolutionary Picture shall be composed, Franklin and Samuel Adams will stand as the central figures. He is the great man of the epoch. He, of all other men, made the American cause popular in England, and so secured troops of friends in the heart of the enemy's camp. He, at an early day, obtained the efficient aid of France, supplies of money and military stores; and in 1778 he induced Louis XVI. to acknowledge the Independence of the United States of America. It seems to me he was the only American that could have accomplished that work; and without the aid of France, it now seems that the Revolution would have failed, and would have been called a "Rebellion;" Hancock and the Adamses had been "traitors," and the rhetoricians would have made political capital by discoursing on the cowardice, the treachery, and the wickedness of that infamous rebel, General George Washington!

But the services by which he is best known were doubtless rendered in his more common and ordinary life; in his powers of moulding matter into machines, of organizing men into companies and institutions. It is amazing how much he accomplished in that way. Nothing was too small for him; nothing too large. He could teach a sea-cook to put a two-pound shot into his kettle of hard peas so that the roll of the

ship should grind them to powder ; and he could organize a state, a nation, or a Household of nations. He was a Universal Yankee, for he filled all the space between the discoveries of a scientific or political truth and the operations of a mechanic who files a screw in a gun-lock.

If it be the function of a great man to help the little ones, to help them to help themselves, who ever did it more or better? We need not be sorry to see a great man busy with the discovery of little things, for the little things form the welfare of a Nation, while they educate the inventor to yet larger power.

Franklin had his enemies, many, bitter, powerful, and unrelenting. From 1757 to 1783, the British Government hated him, whom they feared more than any man. George III. warned his Ministers against the "crafty American, who is more than a match for you all." But his worst foes were in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts ; and the traditional hatred in both these States has come down to this generation. But "let the dead bury their dead."

The American Government was never remarkable for gratitude, until the Mexican war gave us such a crop of self-denying heroes, —

"Who in the public breach devoted stood,  
And for their country's cause were prodigal of blood."

Franklin, after he had been abroad for a long time,

entreated further aid from home, and the Nation would not grant it. Smaller men had clerks assigned to them. Franklin asked in vain; and even his money-claim against the government could not be attended to in his lifetime. It has not been settled since. It never will be.

Remarkable for special gifts of the highest kind, Franklin was yet more extraordinary for the admirable balance of all his faculties, intellectual, moral, affectional, and religious. He was not extravagant in conduct or in opinion, or even in feelings. I do not remember a single exaggeration in all his works. Among all the many schemes he was busy with, there were but two which could be called visionary. One was, that the legislature should be but a single body, and not two, as in England and America. The other was, that the Executive of the Nation should have no pecuniary emolument. These were his only political or philosophic whimseys. He was seldom hurried away by his feelings. But here is one instance, as reported by himself. The famous preacher Whitefield was preaching in Philadelphia, to raise money to build an Orphan House at Savannah, in Georgia. There were then no materials, tools, or workmen in Georgia suitable to construct such an asylum; and Franklin advised Whitefield to build the house at Philadelphia, and send the Georgia orphans to it. But, says he, "He rejected my counsel, and I there-



fore refused to contribute. I happened soon after to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved that he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the coppers. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver. And he finished so admirably that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all."

Most economic of men in all expenditures of power, he could keep his pot boiling continuously, and not let it boil over. To warm his house he did not set one chimney on fire. He said he should like to return to this earth a century after his death, to see how the world went on. It is now sixty-seven years since his death. What if he could have come back on the day of the great procession in September, 1856, when his statue was inaugurated! He would find the education of the lightning carried farther than he had dreamed. He taught it good manners; to keep a little iron road, and not to run against the farmers' barns or the village steeple. He would find that it had been taught to write and print, and to run errands over lands and under seas. What new powers have come into play since his time! What a



change he would find in America ! The thirteen States grown to thirty-one ; and, alas, another asking to come in, and America saying that she shall come in only with fetters on her hands, a yoke on her neck, and the shackles of slavery in her soul ; the three millions of people to thirty millions ; the Boston of ten thousand inhabitants become one of a hundred and seventy-seven thousand eight hundred and forty, the thirty thousand of Philadelphia increased to five hundred and sixty-five thousand five hundred and twenty-nine. But, alas, he would find the four hundred thousand slaves of the United States now numbering more than four million ; and the doctrines that he put into the mouth of an Algerine to ridicule the idea of slavery, now adopted as the principles of fifteen States, and the rules of conduct of our Federal Government. What if he had come back to his own Boston when she made her last rendition of a fugitive slave ! Were he to return to the United States he would find nineteen towns and ninety-eight counties bearing his own name, to honor his life and memory. But if he staid a little while, and bore the same relation to the nineteenth century as formerly to the eighteenth, what would become of his honors ?

His character was singularly simple and healthy. He used the homage of France, and of all Europe, and utilized his praises that were in the lips of men, so as to serve the great purposes of his country.

His life shows the necessity of time to make a great character, a great reputation, or a great estate. You want a long summer to produce a great crop. His old age was beautiful. Honored and admired as no other man, he went to the house he had built a quarter of a century before, with his friends and descendants around him. He continued in public office till within six months of his death, and in the public service till within twenty-four days of it.

The warning he gives is plain — to beware of excess in early youth, of trifling with the most delicate sensibilities of woman, and of ever neglecting the most sacred duties of domestic life. Few men understood the art of life so well as he. He took great pains to correct his faults. All remember the day-book, in which he kept an account of his virtues, arranging them under thirteen heads, until he had put under his feet those lusts that war against the soul. The guidance he gives is also plain. He shows the power of industry, by which he obtained a large estate of money, and still more a manly endowment of learning. At twenty-one he has had two years schooling, and no more; at forty he is master of English, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, and German; at sixty, the greatest Universities in the world, and whole Nations, agree in calling him the greatest philosopher then living. He was not

ashamed of the humblest industry whereby he made his fortune, his reputation, and his character.

He shows not less the power of justice and benevolence. It is his moral and affectional character that has taken the strongest hold on America and the world. When he departed this life, there had been, of his fellow-citizens, great men in public office; men of mighty talents: Jefferson and kindred spirits were in similar high places; but if he should cast his eye on our diplomatic servants abroad now, he would not see a single man eminent for science, literature, benevolence, patriotism; only for politics and satanic Democracy, not the Celestial Democracy. When he left the world Washington was President, and should he come back it would be Pierce or Buchanan. If he might have beheld the great procession in Boston, inaugurating the statue to his honor, how much would his heart have rejoiced at the stalwart and able-bodied men in the fire companies, — originated through his thoughts; at the men whose business it is to beat the anvil, and at all manner of workmen that his eye would have looked upon; and as the Franklin-medal scholars passed, — when he saw whole families, six sons of a single mother, all adorned with his medal, — how proud he would have been! One thing would have pained him. He would have said to the Fathers

of Boston, "Are there no colored people in your town?" "Several thousands," would have been the answer. "Have none of them won the medal?" And the City Government would have hung its head with shame, and said, "We never think of giving medals to those who need them most." As he ran his eye along, he would have seen but two swarthy faces in the whole length of the procession, and presently he would have seen the officers of the Mercantile Library Association expel them from its ranks, and Boston would not have answered, and said, Shame! but Franklin would have cried, Shame!

What a life it was! Begun with hawking ballads in the streets of a little colonial town, continued by organizing education, benevolence, industry; by conquering the thunders of the sky, making the lightning the servant of mankind; by establishing Independence; by mitigating the ferocity of war, and brought down to its very last day by his manliest effort, an attempt to break the last chain from the feeblest of all oppressed men. What a life! What a character! Well said a French poet, —

"LEGISLATOR OF ONE WORLD! BENEFACTOR OF TWO!  
ALL MANKIND OWES TO YOU A DEBT OF GRATITUDE."

# WASHINGTON.

(78)





## WASHINGTON.

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IN the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the Colony of Virginia, Westmoreland County, between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers, at a spot called Bridge's Creek, there was living an obscure farmer, named AUGUSTINE WASHINGTON. He was born in 1694, and came of a short-lived family, which had emigrated to America in the year 1657. He inherited but little, and by his own diligence and thrift acquired a considerable property, which chiefly consisted of wild land, negro slaves, and cattle. In the rude husbandry of the time and place, he raised corn, horned beasts, swine, and tobacco. Augustine Washington was first married at the age of twenty-one, to Jane Butler, who became the mother of four children. But she died, 4th November, 1728, only two of her children, her sons Lawrence and Augustine, surviving. Fifteen months later, 6th March, 1730, the elder Augustine, for a second wife, married Mary Ball, said to be beautiful, and the belle of the neigh-

boring country. She became the mother of six children.

GEORGE WASHINGTON was the eldest, the fifth child of his father, and the first of his mother. He was born on Saturday, February 22, 1732, a day famous in the political annals of America. At his birth, his father was thirty-eight years of age; his mother twenty-eight. He first saw the light in a rude farm-house, steep-roofed, with low eaves, one story high, having four rooms on the ground floor, and others in the attic. There were huge chimneys at each end, which were built up outside the house. It was old and rickety then; not a trace now remains; only a plain stone marks the spot as "The Birthplace of Washington."

George Washington was descended from the common class of Virginia farmers. No ruler of the Anglo-Saxon stock has obtained so great a reputation for the higher qualities of human virtue. For more than one thousand years no statesman or soldier has left a name so much to be coveted. None ever became so dear to the thoughtful of mankind. In the long line of generals, kings, and emperors, from the first monarch to the last president or pope, none ranks so high for the prime excellence of heroic virtue. His name is a watchword of liberty. His example and character are held up as the model for all men in authority. So much is he esteemed at

home, that the most selfish and deceitful of politicians use his name as the stalking-horse behind which they creep when they seek to deceive and "exploiter" the People. He is one of the great authorities in American Politics; all parties appealing to him, sometimes for good, most commonly for evil.

This is the ground-plan of Washington's life, — the map of facts and dates, the headlands only being sketched in.

Born, on Saturday morning, February 22, 1732, he was baptized on April 3d, of the same year, in the authorized Episcopal Church of the Parish. His father soon after removed to Stafford County, on the left bank of the Rappahannock, opposite to the town of Fredericton. There George attended a poor private school, — there was no other, — kept by the parish Sexton, who only taught Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic.

At sixteen years of age, in 1748, Washington became a PUBLIC SURVEYOR of land, and found it a profitable business, earning a pistole each day (about three  $\frac{60}{100}$  dollars), and sometimes more than that. He continued in this work for about three years, but had always a turn for military affairs.

There were continual troubles with the French, who were advancing their frontier outposts from their settlements in the Mississippi Valley towards the

Western Virginia borders. Also the American Indians, who dwelt and wandered through the valley of the Ohio River, and along the great lakes, took part in the expeditions and forages thence arising. Hence it became necessary to enroll a Service of Militia, which might, from time to time, be called to active duty. In this Militia, Washington, at the age of nineteen, in 1751, was commissioned by the Governor of Virginia as Adjutant General, with the rank of Major—an office about equal to that of a militia captain in New England. In 1752, he went to the West Indies with his consumptive brother Lawrence, rather a distinguished person in the eastern parts of Virginia, who died in 1752, leaving a large estate for George to settle, of which a considerable portion fell to him. In this way he became possessed of the handsome property of Mount Vernon, which the brother had named for the gallant British Admiral Vernon, under whom he had served in early life. Washington continued to hold his commission in the Virginia Army until the peace in 1758, in which year, about the end of December, he returned to private life as a farmer at Mount Vernon.

On the 6th day of January, 1759, he married Mrs. Martha Custis, the widow of John Parker Custis, a woman distinguished for beauty, accomplishments, and riches. He thus added about one hundred thousand dollars to his estate, which was already

considerable. By her previous marriage she had a son of six, and a daughter of four years of age. From 1759 to 1775 he attended to the details of a country gentleman's life in Virginia, improving his land and adding to his property. He managed his large estate with much skill for the time and place. He became a member of the House of Burgesses (the Legislature of the Colony of Virginia), and in 1774 he was elected a delegate to represent Virginia in the first General Congress of all the British Provinces and Colonies. This Congress was called and assembled through the influence of Dr. Franklin and Samuel Adams. They had devised means, and designed the objects of the Assembly, and had laid out the work for it to do.

On the 15th June, 1775, he was appointed "Commander-in-Chief of the American Forces." No longer men called him Colonel or Esquire. He laid down that high Military office on the 23d December, 1783, and retired to private life at Mount Vernon. In 1787 he was appointed a member of the Federal Convention, which formed THE CONSTITUTION of the United States of America, and, when that Convention was organized, General Washington was elected, by a unanimous vote, to preside over its deliberations.

He was President of the United States from 1789 to 1797.

He retired to private life again in March, 1797 ; but,



on the following January, was elected "Commander-in-Chief of the Armies" then about to be called into service on account of the troubles threatening with the Government of France.

He died at Mount Vernon on Saturday, 14th December, 1799, aged sixty-seven years, nine months, and twenty-two days, leaving an estate of about half a million of dollars, and no child. He was in the military service of Virginia about seven years, and of the United States of America a little more than eight years. He was President of the United States eight years. He was forty years a husband.

For convenience, divide his life into six periods.

I. His boyhood and youth, — his school time from birth to his nineteenth year, 1732–1751.

II. His service in the French and Indian war, from his nineteenth to his twenty-seventh year, 1751–1759.

III. His life as a citizen of Virginia, farmer, member of Assembly, member of the Central Congress, from his twenty-seventh to his forty-third year, 1759–1775.

IV. His service in the Revolutionary War, from his forty-third to his fifty-first year, 1775–1783.

V. His service as President, from his fifty-seventh to his sixty-fifth year, 1789–1797.

VI. The close of all, 1799.



I. In his boyhood and youth, his opportunities for education were exceedingly poor; not equal to those afforded by the public District free schools at that period maintained in every New England village. During the life of his father, while he lived in Stafford County, and until he was eleven or twelve years old, he had the help of Mr. Hobby, a tenant of one of his father's houses, and also schoolmaster and Parish sexton. With him, the lad was taught only reading, writing, and arithmetic. He never studied grammar. That seems to have been one of the lost arts, neglected both in conversation and in writing; and even the art of spelling was in a sad condition. His father died soon after George was eleven years old. He then lived, for a time, with his brother Augustine, at Bridge's Creek, and attended the "Superior School" of Mr. Williams, where he seems to have learned the rudiments of geometry.

Some of his early manuscript books are still preserved. One has the autograph, "George Washington, aged thirteen." These writing-books are handsome monuments of neatness and boyish diligence. "The child is father to the man." In one of these he copied "Forms of Writing," copies of mercantile and legal papers, notes of hand, wills, leases, deeds, and the like. In the same book he also shut up for safe keeping some specimens of "poetry," or what passed for such, — hard-trotting verses, adorned with the

jingling bells of rhyme. He copied, likewise, "Rules for Behavior in Company and in Conversation," which have rather a cold, conventional, and worldly air, showing the greatest deference to men of superior social rank, and implying, in general, that more respect should be paid to the condition than to the real quality of men. These "Rules" seem to have had much influence upon his manly life. His actual manners reflected them.

His fondness for the military profession began early, and was stimulated by the condition of the country, though the tastes of the leading men of Virginia could never be made soldierly. Virginia was always an unmilitary State. His elder brother, Major Lawrence Washington, a powerful man in those parts, was of a soldierly turn. So at fourteen, George procured a midshipman's warrant, and left school. It is said his luggage was put on board the ship. But at the last moment his mother refused her consent: he must not be a British naval officer. On how small a hinge turns the destiny of how great a man! He lived with his brother Lawrence for about two years more, and studied geometry and trigonometry enough to become a practical surveyor of land. His early Field-Books, while a learner, are said to be models of neat accuracy. They contain plottings of the fields about his home or school-house.

In the autumn of 1747, before he was quite sixteen, he left school, yet residing with his brother Lawrence at Mount Vernon, and continued his humble mathematical studies. He was a public land surveyor at the age of seventeen. His manuscript Book of Surveys begins the 22d January, 1749, and is still extant. When he was about sixteen,\* it seems he fancied himself in love with a maiden whose name has perished, but who gave his boyish heart no little puerile unhappiness. He complains that she "is pitiless of my griefs and woes." The course of his true love not running smooth, but being crossed as usual, like other bashful young men he sought to improve its flow by stringing such rhymes as could be had or made, and he talks of his

" Poor, restless heart,  
Wounded by Cupid's dart."

But he survived this affliction, and only his melancholy verses remain to tell the tale. He calls his flame his "Lowland Beauty." It is said she was a Miss Grimes, subsequently wife of Mr. Lee, and the mother of General Henry Lee, who was a favorite with Washington. A little later another maiden, Miss Carey, created mischief in his heart, to which some drafts of letters, still to be read in his journal,

\* Irving, who is often inaccurate, says at "fifteen." The more careful Sparks says "seventeen." Compare Irving, i. 34, with Sparks, i. 78.

bear fruitful witness. He complains that her presence "revives my former passion for your 'Lowland Beauty.' Were I to live more retired from young women, I might, in some measure, alleviate my sorrows by burying that chaste and troublesome passion in the grave of oblivion." It seems he never told his love, but absence, business, fox-hunting at length cured him, and maidens and whining verses forever disappeared from his journal, which, instead, is filled up with details of surveying.

His early life afforded slender means for acquiring knowledge of books, literature, science, or any enlarged ideas. Yet it gave him a good opportunity for learning practical details of American life, and for the development of character. He was much in the fields, fond of athletic sports, riding, hunting, leaping, fencing, and the like. His mother was a woman of rather a severe and hard character, with a high temper and a spirit of command, which her son inherited. She was a good manager, a practical housekeeper, prudent and thrifty, an exact disciplinarian, reserved and formal in her manners. When Lafayette visited her in 1777, he found the thrifty farmer's widow at work in her garden, with an old sun-bonnet on her head; and she had the good sense not to change her working dress when she came to receive the courtly friend of American Liberty. She was a woman of few books, — perhaps of only one, —

"Sir Matthew Hale's Contemplations, Divine and Moral," which her son reverently kept till his own death. She plainly had a great influence upon Washington.

He continued in his business of land surveying for about three years, till he was nineteen years old, and thus passed his youth. He was not brought up on Books, but on the Breast of things. Great duties came on him early. He learned self-command and self-reliance. His education was not costly but precious. It is doubtful whether any King in all Christendom, in the eighteenth century, had so good a preparation for the great art to rule a State as this farmer's son picked up in the rough life on the frontier of civilization in Virginia.

II. His early military life began at the age of nineteen (1751), and lasted about seven years, with various interruptions, till 1758. He was occupied in raising and drilling the soldiers, and commanding them in their rude warfare against the Indians and the French. He was sent across the Alleghanies to the Ohio River on business of great importance. But as the British Government treated the officers of the local militia with contempt, upon the formal declaration of the war he resigned his post, and became a volunteer in General Braddock's army in 1754. In this he held the rank of Colonel, and was



stationed on the frontier of Maryland. Here, for the first time, he saw regular soldiers, well disciplined and accustomed to a soldier's life. His previous exposure had made him familiar with the wild country in Western Virginia and in Pennsylvania, and also with the Indian mode of fighting. The "frontier Colonel" of twenty-three had a military knowledge which, in this expedition, was worth more than all Braddock had gathered from the splendid strategic parades of England and Holland. Had Washington's counsel been followed, the expedition would have been successful. After Braddock's disastrous defeat, Washington was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Forces of Virginia, with the rank of Colonel, and held the office till the return of peace in 1758.\* His position was singularly difficult. First, because the English Governor Dinwiddie, his chief, was ignorant and ostentatious, at once capricious and obstinate, domineering, now commanding and then countermanding, with no reason in either case. He both despised and hated the American Colonies, and, with gross insolence, trampled on the young men of eminent talents. He vexed, thwarted, and outraged Washington continually. Second, the Virginia Legislature, who voted the money and the men, was by no means high-minded, but parsimonious and short-sighted, and had besides a weak and inefficient military system. Third, the Virginians did not make either



good soldiers or good officers. It was difficult to obtain recruits for the rank and file of his little army. When found, they were idle, wasteful, impatient of discipline, and continually deserting, which the civil authorities encouraged them to do. Many of the officers were ignorant, idle, jealous, disobedient, and tyrannical. Washington must create both the body and the soul of his army, and even the legislative disposition to support it. It is hard to conceive a more trying position. He stood in a cowardly army, and had on one side an imbecile administration, an obstinate executive, and a miserly legislature; on the other, a people parsimonious, and seemingly indifferent to their own welfare. While the Indians were ravaging the border, and driving whole towns of people away from their homes, he was obliged to impress soldiers, and to seize Provinces by force. He dared not venture to part with any of his white men for any distance, says the Governor, as he must have a watchful eye on the negro slaves. His army was always ill fed and ill clad. He complains continually of a perpetual lack of provisions, clothing, and even shoes. "Scarcely a man has shoes or stockings, or a hat." He finds fault with his "whooping, hallooing gentlemen-soldiers." Dinwiddie treated him ill, because he complained, and sometimes answered him with capricious cruelty. Amid all these difficulties, the youth of twenty-two

to twenty-six went on with coolness, bravery, and moderation, and rarely overstepped his duty. Sometimes his discipline was a little severe. If a soldier swore, he had twenty-five lashes; five hundred for quarrelling and fighting; one hundred for drunkenness. Desertion was punished with death. His authority was great. The selfishness and cowardice of the people were disgusting. From natural disposition he loved the exercise of power. He complains, "No order is obeyed but such as a party of soldiers, or my own drawn sword, enforces. Without this, not a single horse, for the most earnest occasion, can be had. To such a pitch was the insolence of the people carried by having every point conceded to them." But he was singularly careful to defer to the civil authority when possible. If the right was doubtful, the conscientious young soldier left it to be exercised by the magistrate, not by the military arm. This is to be noted, because it is so rare for military men to abstain from tyranny, especially for young soldiers. And, in fact, it is hard for such, since, naturally, they incline to quick methods and severe measures.

His seven years' apprenticeship in that terrible war, from 1751 to 1758, was an admirable discipline to fit him for greater trials, in a wider and more conspicuous field. The French War was the school for the American Revolution. Here this great scholar took

his first lessons. He learned caution, reserve, moderation, and that steady perseverance which so marked his later life.

In 1756, in the winter, he was sent to Philadelphia, New York, and Boston on military business. Tradition reports that he fell in love with another young lady at New York, but the affair blew over, and came to nought.

III. From the last week in December, 1758, till the 15th June, 1775, Washington had no direct part in military affairs. On January 6, 1759, he married the rich and handsome widow of Mr. Custis, and three months after went to live on his large farm at Mount Vernon, where he continued mainly busy with the common affairs of a Virginia gentleman of large estate. He attended to his farming, raising crops there, and disposing of them in London. He bought and sold land, of which he owned large tracts, chiefly in the unsettled parts of the Province. He visited the wealthy people of Virginia a good deal; was often at Williamsburg, the capital of the Colony, a town of about fifteen hundred or two thousand inhabitants. He received much company at his own house. Most of the distinguished men of Virginia and Maryland, including the royal Governor, were there in these fifteen or sixteen years. His wife's relations he seldom saw more than once a year, they lived so far away.

We usually conceive of Washington as a public man, sternly occupied with most important concerns ; but from 1759 to 1774 he was mainly free from all great public duties or cares. He could employ his time as he liked. His diary, kept on the blank leaves of an almanac, and still preserved, shows how almost every day was spent. From this and his letters, then not very numerous, we see how he passed that period. He was active in parish affairs, — a vestryman in two churches ; one at Pohick, seven miles off, the other at Alexandria, ten miles off. He attended at one of them every Sunday, when the weather and the Virginia roads permitted. He kept a four-horse coach, with a driver, postilion, and footman, — all negro slaves, all in Washington livery, — and lived after the old style of Virginia elegance, in a great, but rather uncomfortable house, surrounded by negro slaves.

At first, his dress was plain and cheap. Thus, in October, 1747, he records in his diary that he delivered to the washerwoman " two shirts, the one marked G. W., the other not marked ; one pair of hose and one band, to be washed against the November courts in Frederic County." In his backwoods fighting, he was often dressed in the Indian style, as were also many of his soldiers. He found it most convenient. But he afterwards acquired a taste for fine dress from his intercourse with British officers. So, in 1756,

he orders from England "two complete livery suits for servants (that is, for his slaves), with a Spanish cloak, the trimmings and faces of scarlet, and a scarlet waistcoat, and two silver-laced hats; one set of horse furniture, with livery lace, with the Washington coat on the housings; three gold and scarlet sword knots; three silver and blue of the same; one fashionable gold-laced hat." The next year, his book records an order on Mr. Richard Washington, a London trader, for "one piece of French cambric; two pair of fine worked ruffles, at twenty shillings a pair; half a dozen pair of thread hose, at five shillings. If worked ruffles should be out of fashion, send such as are not worked; as much of the best superfine blue cotton velvet as will make a coat, waistcoat, and breeches for a tall man, with fine silk buttons to suit it, and all other necessary trimmings and linings, together with gaiters for the breeches; six pair of the very neatest shoes; six pair of gloves, three pairs of which to be proper for riding, and to have slit tops, the whole larger than the middle size."

At a later day, articles of woman's attire appear in the orders. Thus, in 1759, after marriage, we find "a salmon-colored Talby of the enclosed pattern, with satin flounces, to be made in a sack and coat; one cap, handkerchief and tucker, and ruffles to be made of Brussels lace or Point, to cost twenty pounds" (one hundred dollars). Then follow "fine



flounced lawn aprons ; women's white silk hose, and two pair of satin shoes, one black one white, of the smallest sizes ; a fashionable Hatt or Bonnet ; kid gloves, kid mitts, knots, *breast* knots, woven silk lacings (for stays). Red minikin pins and hair pins ; perfumed powder ; Scotch snuff and Strasbourg snuff ; Phillippe shoe-buckles," &c., &c.\* These little good-for-nothing straws show that for a while the great Washington's stream turned off from its straight course, and spread out into broad shallows, trifling with its flowery shores. He was a rich farmer, a country gentleman, raising tobacco, and sending it to England for sale ; managing his own affairs with diligence and shrewdness ; keeping his own accounts with great neatness of detail.† His family seems to have been rather fond of dress, with a great desire to be "fashionable," and made a considerable show in their little provincial world, where life was dull and monotonous to a terrible degree, being relieved only by visitors and visiting.

How did he pass his time ? His diary shows.

\* Kirkland's Washington, 178-180. Afterwards he changes again, and writes Richard Washington, "I want neither lace nor embroidery. Plain clothes, with gold or silver buttons, if worn, are a genteel dress, and are all that I desire." Yet he complains that his clothes have never fitted him well. Sparks, ii. 337.

† Sparks, i. 109. Letter to Robert Cary. Sparks, ii. 328. Agricultural papers. Sparks, xii. Appendix.



" January 1st, 1770. At home alone.

" 2d January. At home all day. Mr. Peake dined here.

" 3d. At home all day alone.

" 4th. Went a hunting with John Custis and Lund Washington. Started a deer, and then a fox, but got neither.

" 5th. Went to Muddy Hole and Dogue Run. Carried the dogs with me, but found nothing. Mr. Warner Washington and Mr. Thurston came in the evening.

" 6th. The two Colonel Fairfaxes dined here, and Mr. R. Alexander, and the two gentlemen that came the day before. The Belvoir family (Fairfaxes) returned after dinner.

" 7th. Mr. Washington and Mr. Thurston went to Belvoir.

" 8th. Went a hunting with Mr. Alexander, J. Custis, and Lund Washington. Killed a fox (a dog one), after three hours' chase. Mr. Alexander went away, and Mr. Thurston came in the afternoon.

" 9th. Went a ducking, but got nothing, the creek and rivers being froze. Robert Adam dined here and returned.

" 10th. Mr. Washington and Mr. Thurston set off home. I went hunting on the Neck, and visited the plantation there, and killed a fox, after treeing it three times, and chasing it about three hours.

" 11th. At home all day alone.

" 12th. Ditto, ditto.

" 13th. Dined at Belvoir, with Mrs. Washington and Mr. and Miss Custis, and returned afterwards.

"14th. At home all day alone.\* Bottled thirty-five dozen cider. Fitted a two-eyed plough, eyed instead of a duck-bill plough, and with much difficulty made my chariot wheel-horses plough. Put the pole-end horses into the plough in the morning, and put in the postilion and hind horse in the afternoon; but, the ground being well swarded over, and very heavy ploughing, I repented putting them in at all, for fear it should give them a habit of stopping in the chariot. Peter (my smith) and I, after several efforts to make a plough upon a new model, partly of my own contrivance, were fain to give it over, at least for the present."

A week later we find, "Spent the greater part of the day in making a new plough of my own invention."† His household books contain the names of his horses and his dogs. He does not seem to have busied himself with any intellectual pursuits. Books seldom appear in his orders for supplies from England. His diary contains no philosophic thought, — nothing which indicates an inquiring mind, only a mind attentive to the facts of every-day life, and scrupulously diligent in recording things of no great consequence. From this it appears that it took his grist-mill fifty-five minutes to grind four pecks of corn, but he was surprised to find that it made five pecks of Indian meal. This is the only scientific observation I have heard of in his diary. His account

\* Kirkland, p. 184.

† Kirkland, p. 191.

of the way his slaves did their work is amusing as well as instructive.

While still in active military service, in 1758, he was chosen member of the Virginia House of Burgesses for the next year. The poll cost him thirty-nine pounds six shillings. Among the articles necessary for the election, his book reads, a hogshead and a barrel of punch, thirty-five gallons of wine, forty-three of strong beer and cider.\* In the Virginia Assembly he was punctual in his attendance, modest in his deportment, but seldom spoke, and never made a set speech. He was distinguished for sound judgment and undeviating sincerity. When troubles came, and the British Government sought to oppress the Colonies, Puritanic New England began the complaint, and Virginia did not tamely submit. A man of details and habits, more than of ideas or of philosophic principles, Washington was not one of the first to move, but at length joined readily and firmly in all the heroic acts to which the wild and eloquent Patrick Henry stirred the Virginia Legislature. He took a prominent part in opposing the Stamp Act, and other oppressive measures of the British King, after the Boston Port Bill. In the extraordinary Convention, it is said Washington made the most eloquent speech that was ever made, "and said, I will raise one thousand men, and subsist

\* Sparks, ii. 297.

them at my own expense, and march myself at their head for the relief of Boston."\* In 1769 he was thinking of the possibility of a fight between the Mother and Daughter.†

The first Continental Congress met at Philadelphia, on September 5, 1774. Washington was one of the six delegates from Virginia, but does not appear to have been much distinguished. Yet Mr. Wirt relates that Patrick Henry said, "In respect to solid information and sound judgment, Colonel Washington is unquestionably the greatest man on that floor."‡

He was a member of the second Congress, which met 10th May 1775. This was after the battle of Lexington; and he appeared there every day dressed in his military uniform. Like the war paint of an Indian, his soldierly dress was a figure of speech, to tell that the time of compromise had passed by, and the question must be settled, not by words, but by blows.

IV. On June 15, 1775, at the suggestion of John Adams, Washington was chosen Commander-in-Chief of the American Army. Political motives determined the choice, fixing it on a Virginian. This was to conciliate the South, and make it friendly to the war.

\* Adams's Writings, ii. 360.

† Sparks, ii. 351, 400 (1774); i. 118.

‡ Sparks, i. 132.

His personal character, his wealth, his knowledge, moderation, skill, and integrity drew to him the far-reaching, honest eyes of John Adams. New England sagacity and self-denial alike suggested the choice. But New England ambition was not content. In the French War New England had done much service, and had won laurels. The Southern States did nothing. Washington was the only officer who had acquired any distinction; and he less than several men from the Eastern States. They naturally found fault. Hancock wanted the post. Certainly he had done more than Colonel Washington to promote the Revolution; and he long cherished a grudge, I think, against Adams for his nomination of Washington. The choice was a thoughtful compromise. New England overcame her prejudices against a Southern man. The modest Virginian declared to Congress, "I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in the room that I declare, with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with."\* He declined the compensation of five hundred dollars a month, and said, "As no pecuniary considerations would have tempted me to accept this arduous employment, . . . I do not wish to make any profit from it. I will keep an exact account of my expenses,

\* See the debate of the Massachusetts Historical Society, in the Boston Daily Advertiser of 17th June, 1858.



which I doubt not the Nation will discharge, and that is all I desire." He wrote a letter to his wife — the only one that he wrote which is preserved — concerning his election, and his acceptance of the office, and enclosing his will, just made. "As it has been a kind of destiny," says the modest man, "that has thrown me upon this service, I shall hope that my undertaking is designed to answer some good purpose." He left Mount Vernon in May, 1775. He did not enter his own doors again till January, 1784.

The new Commander-in-Chief left Philadelphia June 21, reached Cambridge on the 2d July, and took command of the army the next day. He found a motley collection of troops; about seventeen thousand men, more than three thousand sick, all ill-dressed, ill-armed, ill-disciplined, and some with no muskets. The line extended fifteen or sixteen miles, by the then existing roads, from Charlestown Neck to Roxbury. Most of the soldiers had enlisted for a short time. Few were willing to submit to the self-denial and stern discipline of actual war. The officers were ignorant of their duty. General Ward, the previous Commander-in-Chief, was old, and almost imbecile; another General kept his chamber, talking "learnedly of cathartics and emetics." The camp was full of jealousies, rivalries, resentments, petty ambitions; men thinking much for themselves, little



for their imperilled Nation. It is always so. We greatly misunderstand the difficulties of the time. About one third of the people in the Colonies were openly or secretly Tories. Self-denial is never easy, and then much of it was needful. Their trials were often borne grudgingly, and with many attempts to shift the burdens. Had such a spirit prevailed as our rhetoricians and orators of the Fourth of July tell us of, then the Revolution had all been over in a twelve-month, and every red-coat had been driven into the sea. But they were as mean and selfish in 1775 as they have been ever since. The battle of Lexington did not change human nature. Washington must create an army, create even the raw material of it. Congress had no adequate conception of the cost of war, and dealt out money with a stingy hand. It had little enough to give, and a war is of guineas. The people trusted in a volunteer militia serving but a few months, and were afraid of a standing army and a military tyrant. Nothing was ready, no clothes, tents, cannon; even powder was scarce, and at one time there were not seven cartridges to a man. The sentinels returning from duty were not allowed to fire their pieces, but drew the charge.

In Boston, there lay the British Army, superior in numbers, well drilled, armed well, and provided with all that wealth could buy or knowledge could devise. We talk of the heroism of 1776. We do not exag-

gerate. No Nation was ever more valiant and self-denying. But Washington complains "of an egregious want of public spirit," of "fertility in the low arts of obtaining advantages." There were noble men, who would give up all their own property for the public good; but there were others mean and base, who would take all from the public for their own advantage. Then, as now, times of trouble produced a Hancock, an Adams: but how seldom! The superior property, the superior education was on the Tory side. Very cool, very cautious and reserved, Washington had yet the zeal of an enthusiast, and hated the petty selfishness he met. He was not always quite just to New Englanders. From the beginning of July, 1775, till the end of February, 1776, the army did nothing. How could it? Often reduced to ten thousand men! Washington improved the intrenchments, drilled the soldiers, gave unity of action to the whole army. Feeble in men, and supplied only with poor and inefficient arms, he acted on the defensive. But in one night he clinched the industrial New England palm with a mighty fist, and on the sixth anniversary of the Boston Massacre, smote the British Army a deadly blow. The enemy soon left New England, and took twelve hundred Tories along with them. A hostile troop has appeared in Massachusetts but once since, — when it filed through the streets of Boston, and did its wicked work, with none to lift

an arm, slashing the citizens with coward swords, — a wickedness not atoned for yet, but remembered against the day of reckoning. In New England, the people dwelt more compactly together than elsewhere in the Northern States. They were comparatively rich, educated, and very industrious, with that disposition for military affairs belonging to men familiar with the French and Indian Wars. But, after driving the British from Boston, Washington drew his army to New York, and, not having such support as he found in Massachusetts, there followed a whole year of disasters. The Americans were driven from Long Island. Two New England Brigades of militia ran disgracefully from before the British guns. Washington abandoned New York. Fort Washington surrendered to the enemy nearly three thousand soldiers. The flower of the army, with a great quantity of artillery, ammunition, and stores, were lost. The British ships sailed far up the Hudson River, once thought to be impregnably defended. Washington retreated through the Jerseys, his little army dwindling at every step; without intrenching tools, without tents, and with few blankets. Many of the soldiers were barefoot. He flew over the Passaic, over the Raritan, over the Delaware Rivers. At Christmas, the army made one desperate step back again, crossed the Delaware, captured many soldiers at Trenton; then withdrew into the mountains, and

into the darkness of night and the snows of winter. So ended the first campaign. The very January after the Declaration of Independence, with three thousand or four thousand men, Washington crept into his winter quarters at Morristown. What an army for such a work! The difficulties seemed immense. The Midland States were full of Tories, — cruel, revengeful, and malignant. Some of the American Generals were of doubtful faith. General Lee had purposely suffered himself to be taken prisoner, that he might concert a treason\* worse than Arnold's. Congress, discouraged, left Philadelphia and fled to Baltimore. Rhode Island was in the hands of the enemy. Many respectable citizens in the Midland States went over to the British. The Quakers hindered the American cause. The time of most of the soldiers expired. Recruits came in but slowly, and a new army must be created. Still Washington did not despair!

The next spring he regained the Jerseys, but was soon forced to retire. Pennsylvania then, as now, the most ignorant of the Northern States, with its Quakers, did little for Independence. The principal citizens were not friendly to the war, or to its object. Philadelphia was almost a Tory town. Washington had no New England energy close at hand to furnish him provisions or men. He lost the

\* The fact has only just come to light.

battle of Brandywine, failed at Germantown. Philadelphia fell into the hands of the enemy. During the winter of 1777-78 he went into winter quarters at Valley Forge. What a terrible winter it was for the hopes of America! In 1776 he had an army of forty-seven thousand men, and the Nation was exhausted by the great effort. In 1777 it was less than twenty thousand men. Women, who had once melted their pewter plates into bullets, could not do it a second time. At Valley Forge, within a day's march of the enemy's headquarters, there were not twelve thousand soldiers. That winter they lay on the ground. So scarce were blankets, that many were forced to sit up all night by their fires. At one time, more than a thousand soldiers had not a shoe to their feet. You could trace their march by the blood which their naked feet left in the ice. At one time, more than one fourth of all the troops there are reported as "unfit for duty, because barefoot or otherwise naked." Washington offered a prize for the best substitute for shoes made of untanned hides! Even provisions failed. Once there was a famine in the camp, and Washington must seize provisions by violence, or the army would die. He ordered the Pennsylvania farmers to thrash out the wheat and sell it to him, or he would take it, and pay them only for the straw! Congress was disheartened. The men of ability staid at home, and weaklings took their



place. For some time there were only twenty-one members, and it was difficult to assemble a quorum of States for business. Tories abounded. There were cabals against Washington in the army. Mifflin, Conway, Gates, Pickering, Schuyler, were hostile; and they found abundant support in Congress. Samuel Adams distrusted Washington. So, too, did John Adams. James Lovell, of Massachusetts, and Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia, were not more friendly, and far less honorable. It is not wholly to be wondered at. Within a year Washington had lost New York and its neighborhood, — lost Philadelphia, and all the strongholds around it. He had gained but one victory worth naming, that at Trenton. In the mean time Burgoyne, an able soldier, with an admirable army, had walked into a trap on the North River, and had been taken by Gates and the Northern Army, who were most of them militia of New England. It is not wonderful that men doubted, and thought that the selfish, mean-spirited, and loud-talking General Conway would do better than the modest Washington to command the Army. Samuel Adams wanted democratic rotation in office that the General should be hired by the year! If he had not been possessed of great wealth, and cared for nothing, I think Washington's command had come to an end before 1778. But Dr. Franklin was on the other side of the sea, and, with consummate art, he had



induced the French Court to favor America with contributions of money and of arms, and after the surrender of Burgoyne, to acknowledge the Independence of the United States, and to make an open treaty of alliance, furnishing America with money and men, artillery and stores. Then, first, America began to uplift her drooping head. But it must be confessed that when she found that a foreign Nation were ready to assist her, she was the less willing to raise money or men, or otherwise to help herself. She was fatigued, and wanted to rest.

Within our moderate limits there is not time to tell the story of the war — the mingled tale of nobleness, cowardice, and treachery. Peace came at last; and was proclaimed in camp on the 19th of April, 1783, eight years after the battle of Lexington. On the 23d of December, Washington returned his commission to Congress, and presented his account of personal expenses from January 15, 1775, to that date. They were, in all, sixty-four thousand three hundred and fifteen dollars. He then went home to Mount Vernon, and attended to the duties of private life. During the whole war the nobleness of the man stood out great and clear. But when the war was over the soldiers were not at once dismissed. The Nation did not seem inclined to compensate them for their sufferings, losses, or even for their expenses. They naturally became irritated because the money was thus

withheld, which they had earned by such toil in the grim trials of battle. Then it was that they thought of seeking redress by their own armed hand. And then it was that Washington's nobility stood out grander than ever before. He placed himself between the Nation and the Army, and sought and found justice to both.

V. The beginning of 1784 beheld Washington at Mount Vernon with no public office. For almost eight years his shadow had not fallen on his own threshold. His affairs had lapsed into some decay, spite of the prompt and vigilant care he took at a distance. "The horse is fatted by its master's eye,"\* and letters, once a week for eight years, are not like the daily presence of the owner. The active habits of public office were on him still; and when he woke at daybreak, or before, it was his first impression to forecast the work of the day, till he remembered that he had no public work. But public cares still lay heavy on his mighty soul. The soldiers were his children; and still ill fed by the Nation, and scattered abroad, they looked to him for help. He could give sympathy, if nothing more. He had his eye on the whole Nation personally, not officially; anxious for the universal welfare. His correspondence was immense. He attended to agriculture, always his

\* "*Equus saginatur in oculo domini.*"

favorite pursuit; improved his lands, introduced better seeds and breeds of cattle. He exercised a great hospitality, and visitors of distinction crowded about his mansion. He sought to improve the whole State of Virginia, and had a scheme for uniting, by a canal, the Potomac and James Rivers with the waters beyond the Alleghany Mountains. He took a deep and hearty interest in the public education of the people, giving both money and time for that purpose.

America was then in a sad condition. The States were free from England, but not firmly united. "Thirteen staves, and ne'er a hoop, do not make a barrel." The destructive work of liberation had been once achieved by the sword. Next must come the constructive work of Union. Franklin's plan of Confederation, first proposed in 1754, afterwards offered in 1775, and at last accepted, with many variations, in 1778, was hardly adequate to unite the Nation, even when war pressed these thirteen dissimilar members together. In peace they soon fell asunder. The old Government was utterly inadequate. Congress was a single body, composed of a single House, not of two Houses, as now. The vote was by States. Rhode Island, with sixty thousand, counted as much as Virginia, with six hundred thousand inhabitants. There was no Executive Head. Congress was to administer its own laws. There were no Judiciary, no organized Departments for

war, for foreign affairs, or for interior administration. There were only administrative committees of Congress.

The General Government could not raise money — could not pay a debt. The States were intensely jealous of each other. Men called Virginia, or Carolina, "my country," and did not recognize America as such. It was a great work to organize the Nation, and form a national union of America, while, at the same time, the rights of the States, and the personal freedom of individuals, were also to be sacredly preserved. How could the Nation found a firm central Power, which was indispensable, and yet keep intact the local self-government which each State required, and to which it had become accustomed. Unless this theorem could be demonstrated in America, "Liberty" would become a mere Latin word, borrowed from the French. Tories said, "It is impossible!" An insurrection had already broken out in Massachusetts, which frightened the best men in the Nation, making John Adams and Washington tremble, and doubt democratic institutions. "Would it not be better to have a limited monarchy, an hereditary Senate?" So men talked. The Federal Convention of all the States was to meet at Philadelphia, May 14, 1787. Many able men were chosen as delegates, Washington among them, and some very weak ones. But so little zeal was then felt,

that on that day only two States — Virginia and Pennsylvania — appeared to be represented at all. It was not until the 25th May that seven States, the required quorum for business, appeared by their delegates in the Convention, and then Massachusetts was represented by only a single man. Washington was President of the Convention, but it does not appear that he took any prominent part in making the Constitution. On the 17th of September the work was finished and signed — “done by consent of the States.” I think no member of the Convention was satisfied with it. Nobody thought it perfect. Franklin and Washington disliked much of it, for opposite reasons perhaps. Democratic Mr. Gerry opposed it, and refused to sign it. Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and many more, not members of the Convention, were also hostile. At this day we are not likely to do full justice to its authors, representing such diverse local interests, and animated by such hostile political principles. To some the Constitution is a finality, an idol, and its authors inspired men. To others it is “a covenant with death,” and its authors proportionally evil. I know its faults, at least some of them. Time will no doubt develop others, perhaps yet more fatal. I see its victims. There are four millions of them in the United States. I blame its great men, especially Franklin, the greatest man then or since on the American continent.



But I see their difficulties, and remember that nobody is so wise as everybody, and that *now* is a fool to the ages which are to come. There was a Monarchic party, who wanted a strong central Government. Alexander Hamilton was the ablest representative of that tendency. And there was a Democratic party, which contended vigorously for State Rights, and wished to keep all popular power, undelegated, in the hands of the people. Jefferson was the typical man of the Democrats. But he was out of the country, on his mission to France. There really was a danger that the thirteen States should not find a hoop to bind them all into a well-proportioned tub, which might stand on its own bottom. But the States accepted the Constitution, one by one, adding invaluable amendments. Seventy years is a short time in the life of a great people, and the day for the final judgment of the Constitution has not yet come.

VI. Washington was chosen President. With him there could be no competitor for that office. For the Vice-Presidency there might be many; for, while it was plain who was the first man in popular esteem, it was not equally clear who was the second. But John Adams was chosen. In the beginning of the Revolution, Massachusetts and Virginia went side by side. So in the beginning of the Independent



United States must they be joined in the administration of public affairs. It was very difficult to construct the new Government. All must be made anew. There were two great parties in the Nation. The Federalists, who were friendly to the Constitution, and inclined to a strong central Government, some of them perhaps favoring a Monarchy and an Hereditary Senate. The Anti-Federalists, first called "Republicans," and afterwards "Democrats," who had opposed the Constitution, disliked a strong central power, and relied more upon the local self-government of the States, or upon the individual man. With his usual sagacity, Washington selected the best political talent of the country to help the great work, and with characteristic fairness he chose men from both parties. Jefferson was Secretary of State, Hamilton of the Treasury, General Henry Knox of War, and Edmund Randolph, Attorney-General. These composed the Cabinet. The Supreme Court were to be appointed. He put John Jay at its head. He would not be President of a party, but sought to reconcile differences, and to fuse all parties into one. The attempt could not succeed. There were quarrels in his own Cabinet, especially between Jefferson, who was an ideal Democrat, with great confidence in the mass of the People, and Hamilton, who inclined towards Monarchy, and had but small confidence in the People. In the

eight years of Washington's two Presidencies the country was full of strife and contentions between these parties. No President has since had such difficulties to contend with—all was to be made anew; the Departments of Government to be constructed, treaties to be negotiated with Foreign Powers, the revenue to be settled, the public debt to be paid, the Continental paper money to be provided for, or the question disposed of, the limits of the constitutional power of the General Government to be fixed, the forms of procedure in the Federal courts to be settled. The Union itself was so new, the elements were so diverse, the interests of North and South so hostile, it was to be feared the whole would soon fall to pieces. But quickly the Government was organized, an admirable plan of Administration was devised, and the eight years brought increased stability to the American Institutions, greater confidence in them, greater welfare to the whole people, and additional renown to Washington.

I will not here recapitulate the chief acts of his Administration. They are to be found in historical and biographical works. His leading principle was simply to be just to all, and demand justice from all. This was especially difficult in a time of such trouble; for while the constructive work of American Democracy was going on here, in Europe the great destructive forces of Humanity made the earth to

quake, and to swallow down the most ancient Monarchy in the Christian world. Both countries felt the shock of the French Revolution. The Federalists generally took sides against France, and with England, who feared the revolutionary contagion. The Democrats favored the French, and were hostile to England, as being willing to arrest the progress of mankind. Both parties were a little crazy.

VII. On the 3d of March, 1797, Washington withdrew from public life, and in a few days again sat down at Mount Vernon, devoted himself to agriculture, and hoped to enjoy the pleasing leisure of a country life. But his Farewell Address could not save him from public duties. He was to die with his harness on. Fear of war with France called him again to the head of the American Army, which must be reconstructed in the midst of new and endless difficulties. But soon a peaceful trumpet called him to another field. On the 14th December, 1799, Washington ceased to be mortal; and he who had been "first in war, and first in peace," became also "first in the hearts of his countrymen," where he still lives.

It is not difficult to understand a character which is so plain, the features so distinct and strongly marked.

### I. Look at his Intellect.

He had not a great Reason — that philosophic principle which seeks the universal Law and the scientific truths, resting in them as ends. He was not a speculative, but a practical man; not at all devoted to Ideas. He had no tendency to Science. He did not look after causes, ultimate reasons, general laws; only after facts. He was concerned with measures, not with principles. He seldom, if ever, made a philosophic remark on matter or on man. His diary is full of facts. It has no ideas, no hints or studies of a thoughtful character. He had little curiosity to learn the great generalizations of nature. It does not appear that he ever read a single philosophic book. His letters contain no ideas, and refer to no great principles.

II. He had not much Imagination — that poetic power which rests in Ideal Beauty as its end. There was little of the ideal element in him. He takes no notice of the handsome things in Nature, Art, or Literature. I remember but one reference to anything of the kind. That is to be found in the "Lowland Beauty," who so charmed him in boyhood. He looked at Use, not at Beauty. Handsome dress he prized for the dignity and consequence it gave him. This unideal character marks his style of writing, which is commonly formal, stiff, and rather prim,

without ornament, or any of the little wayside beauties which spring up between the stones even of a military road. He seems to have had as little fondness for Literature as for Science. The books he read were practical works, which contained only information, and were quite destitute of the beauty, the inspiration, and the charm of letters. In the great mass of documents which bear his name it is not always easy to see what is his. Some of his greatest State papers were the work of other hands. The Farewell Address must be adjudged to Madison, who made the original draft in 1792, and to Hamilton, who wrought it over in 1797. Washington wrote it out anew with his own hand, making some alterations. It required four months to get it ready, so important did Washington deem the occasion. The greater part of the letters which fill eighty manuscript volumes are written by his secretaries, who must think for him as well as write. Still, there are enough which came unaltered from his pen to show us what power of writing he possessed.

It is refreshing to find that he sometimes departed from the solemn, dull, conventional language of State papers, and calls the British soldiers "Red Coats," and General Putnam "Old Put;" talks of "kicking up some dust," "making a rumpus," of nominating "men not fit to be shoe-blacks;" speaks of "the rascally Puritanism of New England," and "the ras-



cally Tories ; ” “ a scoundrel from Marblehead — a man of Property.” But in general his style is plain and business-like, without fancy or figure of speech, and without wrath. His writings are not grass which grows in the fields ; they are hay which is pitched down from the mow in a barn.

III. Washington had a great Understanding. He had that admirable balance of faculties which we call good judgment ; the power of seeing the most expedient way of doing what must be done, — a quality more rare, perhaps, than what men call Genius. Yet his understanding was not of a wide range, but was limited to a few particulars, all pertaining to practical affairs.

Thus gifted, Washington was not an Originator. I think he discovered nothing, invented nothing — in war, in politics, or in agriculture. The “ new plough of my own invention ” came to nothing. He was a soldier nearly sixteen years. I do not find that he discovered anything new in military affairs. He sat in the Virginia Assembly of Burgesses ; was a delegate to the Continental Congress, and was a member of the Federal Convention at the time when those bodies were busy with the most important matters ; but I do not learn that he brought forward any new idea, any original view of affairs, or ever proposed any new measure. He was eight years President,



and left behind him no marks of originality, of inventive talent, or of power of deep insight into causes, into their modes of operation, or even into their remote effects. Here he stood on the common level of mankind, and saw no deeper or farther than ordinary men. But he was a good Organizer. Naturally systematic, industrious, and regular by early habit, he had the art to make things take an orderly shape, and to serve the purpose he had in view. Thus his large farm at Mount Vernon was managed with masterly skill; the routine of crops was adjusted as well as was then known to the art of Agriculture. In the French and Indian War he took the raw human material, arrayed it into companies and regiments, and made a serviceable little army. In the War of the Revolution he did the same thing on a larger scale, and with, perhaps, yet greater difficulties in his way. He took the rude, undisciplined mass of New England valor at Cambridge, in 1775, and in a few months made it quite an effective army, able to strike a powerful blow. He was called on to do the same many times in that war, and almost always accomplished such tasks with consummate skill. He laid out his plans of a battle or campaign with great good sense. But I think he had no originality in his plans, or in his mode either of arranging his grounds or of marshalling his soldiers. He followed the old schemes, and always took abundant counsel. As President,

he had much of this work of organization to attend to. With the help of the able heads of Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, Jay, and others, it was successfully done.

His great talent was that of Administration. He had that rare combination of judgment, courage, and capacity for action which enabled him to manage all things well. He was fond of detail — no little thing was too minute for his delicate eye. He administered his farm with severe and nice economy; yet the system of Slavery did not allow it to be very productive. His day-books show what all the men are doing. At home he remembered the value of the master's eye.

While absent from Virginia eight years in the army, he had accounts continually remitted from his chief overseer, telling him of all the minute details of the ploughing, planting, reaping, threshing, raising tobacco, and selling it; the birth of cattle and slaves, the health of his animal and of his Human stock. Always, once a week, Washington wrote to his overseer, even in the most troublous times. I think that he never failed of this in all the period of storms, from January, 1776, to December, 1784. With the same skill he administered the affairs of the little miserable Virginia army in the French and Indian War, and the greater cares of the Revolutionary Army.

The nearer we come to the facts, the more are we astonished at the great difficulties he surmounted — want of powder, want of guns, want of clothes, want of tents, want of shoes, and, above all, want of money, which is want of everything. We are amazed at the jealousy of Congress, the bickerings and petty rivalries of little and mean men ambitious of his military renown, at the coldness of the people of Pennsylvania, of Maryland, of the Carolinas, of Georgia, and their indifference, even, to their own success. But we are still more amazed at the high ability with which he administered his humble supplies of means and of men, and at the grand result he brought to pass. He was not a swift thinker; he never fought a brilliant campaign, or more than a single brilliant battle—that at Trenton; but I doubt that Alexander, that Cæsar, that Napoleon, or even Hannibal, had more administrative military skill, save in this, that he had not the power to make rapid combinations on the field of battle; he must think it all out beforehand, draw on paper the plan of movement, and fix the place of the troops. Hence he was skilful in attack, but not equally able when the assault was made upon him. He had slow, far-sighted judgment. In much time he prepared and wrought for much time. He had a real military talent, not a Genius for War.

As President, he administered the political affairs

of the Nation with the same skill, the same patience in details, the same comprehensive diligence. A man of judgment, not of genius, in all important military matters he required each colonel and officer to furnish a written report of what ought to be done, compared them all carefully, and made up his mind after a thorough knowledge of the facts, and a careful examination of the opinions of able men.

I do not find that Washington had any new ideas about Government, or about political affairs. He opposed the British Despotism in 1768; but all New England had gone that way before him, and he followed after in the train of the ablest and some of the richest men in Virginia. He favored the union of the Colonies; but Franklin had suggested that in 1754, and Massachusetts, in 1770, appointed a committee to confer with all the Colonial Legislatures. He attended the Continental Congress in 1774; but Franklin, then in England, had really originated it. He sought for Independence; but, long before him, the great souls of Samuel Adams and Joseph Hawley had shown that it was indispensable, and the fiery tongue of Patrick Henry had proclaimed it. I think the Constitution does not owe a thought to him. The original plan of the details of the Federal Government does not seem to have come from him, but from Jefferson, Hamilton, Jay. Let us be reverent of great names, also just. Washington's superiority to

others was not intellectual. He was continually surrounded by abler minds in the Virginia Legislature and in the Continental Congress, in the Army and in the Cabinet. Compare him with Franklin, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, Jay, Madison, with Greene, Pickering, and many more. But he pretended to no intellectual greatness, and was one of the most modest of men. This appeared in all his life, from the day the Virginia Assembly presented the blushing colonel with their thanks, until he gave the people of the United States of America his Farewell Address.

II. His excellence was moral. He had that constitution and quality of moral power which is to virtue what good sense is to intellect. One of the most conscientious of men, he was not morally romantic, enthusiastic, or transcendental. There was no more moonshine in his moral than in his intellectual character. His virtue was not

“too bright and good  
For human nature’s daily food.”

1. His natural temperament did not much incline him to the vices of passion in youth, for he was of that stern and austere make which leans to strictness rather than to self-indulgence. He wrote in his copy-book, “Labor to keep alive in your breast that



little spark of celestial fire called conscience." In few hearts did it ever burn with a steadier and more constant flame. Yet there was no unusual rigidity in his rules of life. He was a man, and not an ascetic.

He had a nice love of order, and a quick instinct for decorum. This appears in the neatness of his writing-books at the age of thirteen; in the accuracy of his diagrams made when he was a surveyor, farmer, or soldier; in the clear round hand and lucid style of his writings; in the regularity of his habits; the stately deportment which marked him, whether in the forest, the camp, or in the Senate of the Nation. Yet if you look carefully, you find he was not so fastidious as to order in thoughts as in things. He was fond of form and parade, and when President, adopted the stately customs of Monarchic Courts, not unjustly complained of at the time as savoring of aristocracy, and looking towards kingly institutions. It may be that Hamilton, Adams, and others had more to do with this foolish parade than Washington himself. Yet he loved splendor, and rode in a coach with four and sometimes six horses. Other Virginia gentlemen did the same. Men could not forget the old nonsense all at once. "*Nihil saltatim, omne gradatim,*" is Nature's rule of conduct. He was accurate in his accounts, omitting no little detail, punctual in regard to time, orderly in all things.



2. He had great power of wrath, inheriting the high, hasty temper of his mother. In youth he was "sudden and quick in quarrel." In middle life his passion was tremendous, sometimes getting vent in words, sometimes in blows. He never overcame this excess of heat, this congenital distemper of the blood. Jefferson tells of a great "occasion when the President was much inflamed, got into one of those passions when he cannot command himself," "called Freneau a rascal," and did not miscall him, and said "that, by God, he would rather be in his grave than in his present situation." \* In the latter years of the Revolution his temper greatly offended the officers.

In 1775, at Cambridge, the army was destitute of powder. Washington sent Colonel Glover to Marblehead for a supply of that article, which was said to be there. At night the colonel returned, found Washington in front of his Head Quarters, pacing up and down. Glover saluted. The General, without returning his salute, asked, roughly, "Have you got the powder?" "No, sir." Washington swore out the great terrible Saxon oath, with all its three specifications. "Why did you come back, sir, without it?" "Sir, there is not a kernel of powder in Marblehead." Washington walked up and down a minute or two, in great agitation, and then said, "Colonel

\* See Jefferson's Works, ix. p. 164.

Glover, here is my hand, if you will take it, and forgive me. The greatness of our danger made me forget what is due to you and to myself."

Tobias Lear, his intimate friend, and private secretary, says, that in the winter of 1791, an officer brought a letter telling of General St. Clair's disastrous defeat by the Indians. It must be delivered to the President himself. He left his family and guests at table, glanced over the contents, and when he rejoined them, seemed calm as usual. But afterwards, when he and Lear were alone, he walked the room silent a while, and then broke out in great agitation. "It is all over. St. Clair is defeated, routed; the officers nearly all killed, the men by wholesale; the disaster complete, too shocking to think off, and a surprise into the bargain!" He walked about, much agitated, and his wrath became terrible. "Yes," he burst forth, "here, on this very spot, I took leave of him. I wished him success and honor. 'You have your instructions,' I said, 'from the Secretary of War. I had myself a strict eye to them, and will add but one word, *Beware of a surprise!* I repeat it, BEWARE OF A SURPRISE! You know how the Indians fight!' He went off with this, as my last solemn warning, thrown into his ears; and yet, to suffer that army to be cut to pieces, hacked, butchered, tomahawked, by a surprise, the very thing I guarded him against! O God! O God! he is worse than

a murderer ! How can he answer for it to his country ? The blood of the slain is upon him, the curse of widows and orphans, the curse of Heaven !” His emotions were awful. After which he cooled a little, and sat down, and said, “This must not go beyond this room. General St. Clair shall have justice. I looked through the despatches, saw the whole disaster, but not all the particulars. I will receive him without displeasure ; I will hear him without prejudice. He *shall* have full justice.” \*

3. By nature and education he had a strong love of approbation, and seemed greedy of applause. This appears in his somewhat worldly “Rules of Conduct,” which he copied out in his youth ; in his fondness for dress, which did not come from a nice artistic sense of beauty, but rather from a desire to win the respect and esteem of other men ; and from that sensitiveness to public opinion which appears at all periods of his life, especially at the period when he was criticised with such cruel injustice and wanton insult. In early life he loved honor, and was ambitious for distinction, and so obtained a commission in the forces of Virginia.

I think he never had that mean passion of love of

\* See MSS. in Sparks’s Washington, x. p. 222 ; Rush’s Washington in Domestic Life, pp. 67-69.

approbation which is called vanity, and is to honor what the foam is to the sea. The scum it genders drives before the wind, and unsubstantial melts away. Yet in all his manly public life as Legislator, General, President, I cannot find an instance in which he courted popularity. Office always sought him; he never sought it. In no instance did he stoop his majestic head to avoid calumny, or to pick up the applause which might be tainted with the least uncleanness. Admirers there were about him; there was no place for a flatterer.\* In all his public addresses, in all his official or private letters, and in the reports of his familiar talk, there is no evidence that he referred to himself, or alluded to any great or good deed he had ever done! In the eleven thick volumes of his works, and in the many other manuscripts which are still preserved, I find not a line which was written with the peacock feather of vanity, not a word which asks applause. After 1790, the eyes of the nation — yes, of the world — were on the sublimest man in it. His eye was on the Nation, and on the Eternal Right, not on George Washington, or on his great deeds. Popularity is a boy's bonfire in the street. Merit is the heavenly light of sun, and moon, and star.

\* In Villemain's, *Vie de Chateaubriand* (Paris, 1858), pp. 51, 52, see the account of the youthful enthusiast's interview with Washington in 1791.

4. Washington was a courageous man. He had that vigorous animal bravery, which laughs at danger and despises fear. But this was tempered with caution. It was discreet valor, which did not waste its strength. In his report of the little battle with Jumonville, in 1754, when he was twenty-two years of age, it is related that he said, "I heard the bullets whistle, and, believe me, there is something charming in the sound!" King George the Second added, "He would not say so if he had been used to hearing many." When Washington was once questioned about the story, he answered, "If I ever said so, it was when I was young." \*

But he had that high moral courage, which dares affront perils greater than the whistling of bullets. He chose the right cause, though it were unpopular, and held to it, fearful of nothing but to do wrong. When defeated, he still bore up amid the greatest difficulties. The Americans were beaten in every attack made upon them, from the Battle of Bunker Hill, June 17, 1775, till the battle of Fort Mifflin, October 22, 1777: they were victorious only when they made the charge. Yet Washington did not despair. At Cambridge he had no powder, yet his courage and perseverance held out. He lost Long Island, New York Island, Fort Washington, and some three thousand men. This was the great-

\* Sparks, ii. 40.



est disaster of the whole war. He fled through the Jerseys, his army dwindling and shrinking till he had hardly seven thousand men, ill armed, unpaid, ill clad, ill fed. Yet his heart did not fail him. He wrote his brother, "If every nerve is not strained to recruit the new army with all possible expedition, I think the game is pretty nearly up." On the 20th December, 1776, he tells the President of Congress, Mr. Hancock, "Ten days more will put an end to the existence of our army!" The recruits came in slowly, and the enemy, in full force, lay at New York, within two days' march of him. But Washington's courage did not fail him, nor his hope. Many of the early officers of the Revolution left the army in disgust. The Nation did not pay their expenses, and made no promise of future indemnity. This discouraged the men, and they could not enlist again after their favorite commanders were gone. But Washington still held on, and sought to cheer the fainting souls of both officers and men. In 1777, when the British held Philadelphia, and Washington went into winter quarters at Valley Forge, only a day's march off, at a time of the greatest peril, the cowardly State of Pennsylvania had but twelve hundred militia in the field to defend their own firesides. Tories abounded, full of insolence. Congress was thinly attended. There were whole weeks with no quorum of States. Many of the members were hos-



tile to him. But his great heart did not give up. There was a cabal in the army against him. Conway, Gates, Mifflin, and perhaps Pickering, coveted his place, and attempted his ruin. Reed, his confidential secretary, was party to the intrigue. Members of Congress distrusted him, and openly or secretly opposed him, and wished to remove him from office. Had he not served them for nothing, they would have done so; and yet this great soul bore up against it all, and never quailed before so manifold a storm of evil.

5. Washington had a will of mighty strength, — firm, resolute, tenacious. When his mind was made up, nothing turned him aside. But he had such admirable self-command that he was not at all invasive of the opinions of others. He respected the personality of men, and did not impose his will upon them; neither did he allow others to intrude upon him; but he kept himself apart, austere as the northern star. He held the military power in exact subordination to the Civil. Where he was present, the laws spoke with clear voice. In the midst of arms, he did not abuse power.

Yet he sometimes proposed harsh measures. He wished, in 1776, to arrest and confine all who refused to receive the Continental paper-money at par, and to report them for trial to the States to which they

belonged. He wanted speculators and forestallers brought to condign punishment. "I would to God," said he, in 1779, "that some one of the more atrocious in each State were hung in chains upon a gallows five times as high as the one prepared for Haman." \*

VI. The highest moral quality is Integrity, faithfulness to conviction and to all delegated trust. This was his crowning virtue. He had it in the heroic degree. It appears in all his life, — from the boy of thirteen, diligently copying his tasks, to the famous man, well nigh threescore and ten. Here I know not who was his superior. I cannot put my finger on a deliberate act of his public or private life which would detract from this high praise. He had no subtilty of character, no cunning; he hated duplicity, lying, and liars. He withdrew his confidence from Jefferson when he found him fraudulent; from his secretary, Reed, when he was found false in a small particular. He would not appoint Aaron Burr to any office, because he knew him to be an intriguer. He could be silent, he could not feign; simulation and dissimulation formed no part of his character. Reserved, cautious, thinking before he spoke, I can find no act of his civil life which implies the least insincerity, the least want of ingenuousness in the man.

\* Hildreth, iii. 272.

In war, he used fraud to spare force, and won the greatest triumph of the Revolution by a military lie. In 1781, the British General Clinton had an army at New York, Cornwallis another in Virginia. Washington lay along on the North River and the Jerseys. He meant to strike Cornwallis. To render the blow sure and effective, he must make it appear that he intended to attack New York. He did so more than a year beforehand. He deceived the highest civil officers, the highest military officers, and all the Middle and Eastern States. To mislead the enemy, he collected forage and boats in the neighborhood of New York, built ovens, as if he intended to remain there and attack the city. He wrote letters to the American and French officers, ordering them to that place, for he should besiege the town, and sent them so that they were sure to fall into the enemy's hands. He deceived friend and foe. Then at the right moment he broke up his camp, marched hastily to Virginia, and dealt the fatal blow at Cornwallis at Yorktown.\*

All this deception was as necessary to his military plan as powder to his cannon. It implies no deceitfulness of character in the deceiver.

He had no meanness, no little resentments. If he wronged a man in his hasty temper, he sought to repair the wrong. There was nothing selfish in his

\* Sparks, viii. 141; ix. 402.

ambition. He rises above the most of men about him, — in the camp, in the Congress, or the Cabinet, — as a tall pine above the brushwood at its feet. He did nothing little. After the fighting was over, the army was not paid, and there was no certainty of payment. The Nation might leave it to the States, and the States might refer it back again to the Nation. The Government was weak from its centre, and not efficient or respectable from the character of some of its members. A portion of the officers of the army, aided by monarchial men in all the States, wished to make Washington king. He needed only to say "Yes," and the deed was done. He pushed the crown away with conscientious horror.

How admirable was all his conduct after the cessation of hostilities! He was faithful to the army, faithful to the Nation, because he was faithful to himself. How grand was his address to the army, — his letter to the governors of the States, — his address to Congress when he returned his commission! In all the history of mankind, can one find such another example of forbearance — a triumphant soldier refusing power, and preferring to go back and till his farm?

"His means were pure and spotless as his ends."

III. Washington was not what would be called an affectionate man, or one rich in tender emotions of love. Neither his nature nor his breeding tended

that way. His nature seems more stern than kindly ; exact and moral, but not loving. He was a soldier at nineteen. Great cares lay on him in his early youth, and chilled the growth of the gentler emotions. His marriage was not very propitious. Mrs. Washington appears as a dressy, fashionable woman, without much head or heart. The one letter of her husband, and his occasional references to her, do not give us a very pleasing picture of the woman. It is said "she took the forward end of the matrimonial yoke." To command and obey is a soldier's duty. The great General practised the first in the army, and the last at Mount Vernon. He had no children, and so lost the best part of his affectional education. There was nothing in his circumstances to supply the original defect of nature. And so, upright in his principles before God, and downright before man, he was not affectionate and loving. Few flowers of that tender quality spring up along his military, official, or domestic paths. He was a just guardian, rather than an affectionate uncle. He was bashful and silent among women. Yet he was a benevolent man, and charitable. He was attached to his relations. He seems to have loved Lafayette. He had confidence in Generals Knox, Lincoln, Greene, Governor Jonathan Trumbull, Joseph Reed, Madison, Tobias Lear, perhaps Harrison, and at one time Jefferson. I think of none besides ; but beyond this confidence he



had little affection for them. Yet he had no tendency to cruelty, and mitigated, as far as possible, the horrors of war. He had delicate feelings towards prisoners, but no pity for the "rascally Tories," as he calls them. He wore his wife's miniature all his life. It lay on his bosom when he died. But at his death there were no tender partings for her. He took leave of no one, but died like a soldier.

Nobody was familiar with Washington; scarcely any one intimate. Men felt admiration, reverence, awe, devotion for this collection of grand qualities, but not love. They would lay down their lives for him, but they could not take him to their heart. He would not suffer it.

IV. In Washington's religious character there appears the same peculiarity which distinguished his intellectual, moral, and affectional relations. He had much of the principle, little of the sentiment of religion. He was more moral than pious. In earlier life a certain respect for ecclesiastical laws made him a vestryman of two Episcopal Churches, and kept him attentive to those externals, which, with ministers and reporters for the newspapers, pass for the substance of religion. It does not appear that he took a deep and spiritual delight in religious emotions, still less in poetry, works of art, or in the beauty of Nature. His disposition did not incline



that way. But he had a devout reverence for the First Cause of all things, and a sublime, never-failing trust in that Providence which watches over the affairs alike of nations and of men. He had a strong, unalterable determination to do his duty to his God, with an habitual dread of aught unworthy of that Holy Name. I do not think he always forgave his enemies, like Dr. Franklin ; but he took no revenge on others, and never, save in momentary wrath, spoke ill words of men who hated and sought to ruin him.

In the latter years of his life, from 1778 till death, he partook of what is called the Lord's Supper but once. Ministers have taken their revenge for the omission, and have denied or doubted his religious character.

It is not easy to ascertain in detail his theological opinions, for on that matter he held his peace. Ministers often sought to learn his creed. It was in vain. Once only he spoke of "the pure and benign light of Revelation," and "the Divine Author of our blessed Religion." Silence is a figure of speech. In his latter years he had no more belief in the popular theology than John Adams or Benjamin Franklin, though, unlike them, he was not a speculative man. He was entirely free from all cant, bigotry, and intolerance.

Ministers, anxious to claim so noble a man for the

Christian Church, find proof of his religious practices in the fact that he punished swearing in the army, had prayers in the camp at Fort Necessity in 1754, attended meeting, referred to Divine Providence, spoke with praise of Christianity, and once, during the Revolution, took bread and wine in a Presbyterian meeting-house. I find his religion rather in the general devoutness of the man, and in his continual trust in God; in the manly self-command which triumphed over such a wild tempest of wrath as he sometimes held chained within him, and which kept within bounds that natural love of power, of all evil tendencies the most difficult, perhaps, to overcome. I find it in that he sought duty always, and never glory. I find it in the heroic integrity of the man, which so illustrated his whole life. Above all do I find it in his relation to the Nation's greatest crime. He was born a slaveholder, and so bred. Slaves fell to him by his marriage, which were the entailed property of his wife, and could not be got rid off till her death. The African slave-trade was then thought as legitimate and honorable a trade as dealing in cattle, in land, in wheat, or in oil. Washington disliked slavery, thought it wrong and wicked. In June, 1774, he was chairman of the committee which drafted the resolution of Fairfax County, and was the moderator of the meeting which passed them. "No slaves ought to be import-

ed into any of the British colonies on this Continent." They express the "most earnest wishes to have an entire stop put *forever to such a wicked, cruel, and unnatural traffic.*" In 1783, he writes to Lafayette, who had bought an estate in Cayenne, with a view to emancipate the slaves, "I shall be happy to join you in so laudable a work. It is a generous and noble proof of your humanity. Would to God a like spirit might diffuse itself into the heart of the people of this country. But I despair of seeing it. By degrees it certainly might, and assuredly ought, to be effected, and that, too, by legislative authority."

In his famous farewell to the army, he congratulated the soldiers of the Revolution on their helping out this stupendous fabric of Freedom and Empire, on protecting the rights of Human Nature, and establishing an asylum for the poor and oppressed of all nations and religions.\* He sought to promote the emancipation of all the slaves in Virginia. That could not be done. At last, by his will, he set free all his own bondmen. Their delivery was to take place at the death of his wife. He wished it before, but it could not be brought to pass. He provided for the feeble and the old. The young ones were to be free at twenty-five, and be taught to

\* In a letter to the English or Scotch gentleman who wished to settle in Virginia, he thinks he may object to slavery; "but slavery will not last long," says he.

read and write. He says, "I do hereby expressly forbid the sale, or transportation out of the said Commonwealth, of any slave I may die possessed of, under any pretence whatsoever. I do moreover most pointedly and most solemnly enjoin it upon my executors to see that this clause respecting slaves, and every part hereof, be religiously fulfilled, without evasion, neglect, or delay." Here Washington rose superior to his age; here I find proof of the religious character of the man. If Christianity be more than one of the many delusions imposed on a groaning world, it is because it is that Religion which consists in natural piety, the love of God, and in natural morality, the keeping of his laws. And if Morality and Piety be Religion, then who shall dare charge Washington with lack of Christianity? Shall Ministers, who fawn upon wickedness, and Legislators, who enact iniquity into Laws? But great man as he was, — conscientious, moral, religious, in the high sense of that abused word, "religion," — he was not without his errors and great offences in the matter of slavery. A negro fell in the Boston Massacre. One of the seventy at Lexington, "who fired the shot heard round the world," was a negro, and died for liberty on the 19th April, 1775. There were many Africans in the battle of Bunker Hill; the Rhode Island troops, in the Revolution, were full of black men. In the terrible fight in defence of Red

Bank, on the Delaware, in 1777, a negro regiment from New England stood in the thickest of the battle. Washington was a leading member of the Federal Convention. He and Franklin were the greatest men in the Nation. Had Washington, the great and successful General, the President of the Convention, with the Nation's eyes fixed upon him, said to that body, "Let there be no slaves in the United States," there had been none to-day. We might have lost the termagant and noisy Tory Sister Carolina; we should have gained millions of Freemen. But Washington sat, and said nothing. I doubt not his conscientiousness.

When he was chosen President in 1789, numerous public bodies sent him their congratulations; most of the States adding their hearty testimonials of personal respect. The Legislature of Georgia sent the address of that State, and complained of "the facility of our black people crossing the Spanish line, from whence we have never been able to recover them." This was the beginning of the Florida War. This the first address of Georgia. Washington promises to attend to that matter, and in 1791 attempts to recover those poor exiles of Florida, who had sought refuge from bondage among Christians, by fleeing to the Creek Indians in Spanish America. Thus Washington appears in the second year of his Presidency as a national stealer of men, no doubt sorely against



his will.\* He seized the first fugitive slave in June 7, 1793, — one of the early invasions of the Federal Government upon the rights of the States. One of the favorite slaves of his wife ran away. He heard she was living at Portsmouth, in the State of New Hampshire, and he wrote to some Government officer there, asking if she could be arrested and brought back without riot and public scandal. The answer was, "No! The arrest of a fugitive woman as the slave of General Washington would not be tolerated in New Hampshire." The President gave up the pursuit. I make no doubt with inward delight.

You will say, "He did little for the freedom of the slaves." He did more than all Presidents, with the exception of Jefferson and Madison. Think of any President for forty years daring to call slavery "wicked," "unnatural," to commend emancipation, or liberate his slaves at his death. Some ministers would say, "He hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel!" Judge men by their own acts, and by their own light, not by yours or mine. Before he left the earth, he wrenched the fetters from off each bondman's foot, and, as he began his flight to heaven, dropped them down into the bottomless pit of Hell, where they may find who seek.

In his person, Washington was six feet high, and

\* Sparks, x. 163; xii. 181.



rather slender. His limbs were long; his hands were uncommonly large, his chest broad and full, his head was exactly round, and the hair brown in manhood, but gray at fifty; his forehead rather low and retreating, the nose large and massy, the mouth wide and firm, the chin square and heavy, the cheeks full and ruddy in early life. His eyes were blue and handsome, but not quick or nervous. He required spectacles to read with at fifty. He was one of the best riders in the United States, but, like some other good riders, awkward and shambling in his walk. He was stately in his bearing, reserved, distant, and apparently haughty. Shy among women, he was not a great talker in any company, but a careful observer and listener. He read the natural temper of men, but not always aright. He seldom smiled. He did not laugh with his face, but in his body, and while calm above, below the diaphragm his laughter was copious and earnest. Like many grave persons, he was fond of jokes and loved humorous stories. He had negro story-tellers to regale him with fun and anecdotes at Mount Vernon. He was not critical about his food, but fond of tea. He took beer or cider at dinner, and occasionally wine. He hated drunkenness, gaming, and tobacco. He had a hearty love of farming, and of private life. There was nothing of the politician in him, no particle of cunning. He was one of the most industrious of men. Not an elegant or accurate

writer, he yet took great pains with style, and, after the Revolution, carefully corrected the letters he had written in the time of the French War, more than thirty years before. He was no orator, like Jefferson, Franklin, Madison, and others, who had great influence in American affairs. He never made a speech. The public papers were drafted for him, and he read them when the occasion came. Washington was no Democrat. Like the Federal party he belonged to, he had little confidence in the people. He thought more of the Judicial and Executive Departments than of the Legislative body. He loved a strong central power, not local self-government. A little tumult, like Shays's insurrection in Massachusetts, or the rebellion in Pennsylvania, made him and his Federal associates tremble for the safety of the Nation. He did not know that "something must be forgiven to the spirit of Liberty." In his administration as President, he attempted to unite the two parties,—the Federal party, with its tendency to monarchy, and perhaps desire for it, and the Democratic party, which thought that the Government was already too strong. But there was a quarrel between Hamilton and Jefferson, who unavoidably hated each other. The Democrats would not serve in Washington's Cabinet. The violent, arbitrary, and invasive will of Hamilton acquired an undue influence over Washington, who was beginning, at sixty-four, to feel

the effects of age; and he inclined more and more to severe laws and consolidated power, while on the other part the Nation became more and more democratic. Washington went on his own way, and yet filled his Cabinet with men less tolerant of Republicanism than himself.

Of all the great men whom Virginia has produced, Washington was least like the State that bore him. He is not Southern in many particulars. In character, he is as much a New Englander as either Adams. Yet, wonderful to tell, he never understood New England. The slaveholder, bred in Virginia, could not comprehend a state of society where the Captain or the Colonel came from the same class as the common soldier, and that off duty they should be equals. He thought common soldiers should only be provided with food and clothes, and have no pay. Their families should not be provided for by the State. He wanted the officers to be "gentlemen," and, as much as possible, separate from the soldier.\* He asked the Massachusetts Legislature, of 1775, to impress men into the Revolutionary Army, and to force them to fight for the liberty of not being forced to fight. He finds more fault with New England in one year than with all the other nine States in seven years. He complains of the egregious want of pub-

\* He thought the government of an army must be a perfect despotism. Hildreth, iii. pp. 163-166.

lic spirit in New England; but little Massachusetts provided more men and more money than all the wide States south of Mason's and Dixon's Line, and drove her Tories down to Halifax, while the Southern States kept theirs at home! While he was uttering his murmurs, the little State of Rhode Island had more than four thousand soldiers and sailors in actual service; yet her whole population was not sixty thousand souls. Thus one fifteenth of her entire population, counting men, women, and children, was in active service at one time.\* In like ratio, Virginia should have had forty thousand soldiers in the field. Yet, in 1780, General Arnold, the traitor, with less than two thousand men, ravaged in the State of Virginia for five months. Jefferson did nothing against him. Washington does not complain of Virginia's egregious want of public spirit. He never understood New England; never loved it, never did it full justice. It has been said Washington was not a great soldier; but certainly he created an army out of the roughest materials, outgeneralled all that Britain could send against him, and in the midst of poverty and distress, organized victory. He was not brilliant and rapid. He was slow, defensive, and victorious. He made "an empty bag stand upright," which Franklin says is "hard." Some men command the world, or hold its admiration by their

\* Sparks's American Biography, vol. xix. p. 334.

Ideas or by their Intellect. Washington had neither Original Ideas, nor a deeply-cultured mind. He commands by his Integrity, by his Justice. He loved Power by instinct, and strong Government by reflective choice. Twice he was made Dictator, with absolute power, and never abused the awful and despotic trust. The monarchic soldiers and civilians would make him King. He trampled on their offer, and went back to his fields of corn and tobacco at Mount Vernon. The grandest act of his public life was to give up his power; the most magnanimous deed of his private life was to liberate his slaves.

Washington is the first man of his type; when will there be another? As yet the American rhetoricians do not dare tell half his excellence; but the people should not complain.

Cromwell is the greatest Anglo-Saxon who was ever a Ruler on a large scale. In intellect he was immensely superior to Washington; in integrity, immeasurably below him. For one thousand years no king in Christendom has shown such greatness, or gives us so high a type of manly virtue. He never dissembled. He sought nothing for himself. In him there was no unsound spot; nothing little or mean in his character. The whole was clean and presentable. We think better of mankind because he lived, adorning the earth with a life so noble. Shall we make an Idol of him, and worship it with huzzas on the



Fourth of July, and with stupid Rhetoric on other days? Shall we build him a great monument, founding it in a slave pen? His glory already covers the Continent. More than two hundred places bear his name. He is revered as "The Father of his Country." The people are his memorial. The New York Indians hold this tradition of him. "Alone, of all white men," say they, "he has been admitted to the Indian Heaven, because of his justice to the Red Men. He lives in a great palace, built like a fort. All the Indians, as they go to Heaven, pass by, and he himself is in his uniform, a sword at his side, walking to and fro. They bow reverently, with great humility. He returns the salute, but says nothing." Such is the reward of his Justice to the Red Men. God be thanked for such a man.

"A soul supreme, in each hard instance tried,  
Above all pain, all passion, and all pride,  
The rage of power, the blast of public breath,  
The lust of lucre, and the dread of death."



JOHN ADAMS.

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## JOHN ADAMS.

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IN 1634 the General Court of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay made a grant of lands at Mount Wollaston (now in the town of Quincy) to enlarge the town of Boston. In 1636 the inhabitants of Boston granted some of those lands in lots to individual settlers, and even to new residents, who presently formed a church, and settled their ministers. In 1640 they were incorporated as a town, which bore the name of Braintree. I find forty acres of land granted to one Henry Adams. He died in 1646, and left an estate appraised at seventy-five pounds, thirteen shillings. It consisted of the land, a barn, and a house, which had one kitchen, one parlor, and one chamber in the attic, where dwelt the eleven persons who made up the family. The inventory of his estate, taken after his death, catalogues "three beds," which must have contained them all at night. He left also one cow, one heifer, swine, some old books, and a silver spoon. He was grandfather's grandfather to the second President of

the United States. It was not a conspicuous family in those times, though it has since borne two Presidents, and is still vigorous and flourishing, promising I know not how great future glories. On the other side of the water antiquaries and genealogists find that the family was old and baronial.

Indeed, the name would justify a larger genealogical claim. The Adamses ought to be an old family and a great. According to the received accounts, it is the first in the world. Look at the far-famed descendant of this Puritanic Henry of Braintree, and see what he did and suffered, and what extraordinary events he thereby brought to pass.

To understand his life, divide it into six parts:—

I. His childhood and youth, from birth till twenty-three. 1735 to 1758.

II. His doings as a lawyer in Suffolk County, from twenty-three till about forty. 1758 to 1775.

III. His work as a politician in Congress and at home, from forty till forty-three. 1775 to 1778.

IV. Diplomatic services in Europe, from forty-three till fifty-two. 1778 to 1787.

V. His conduct in the Executive of the United States as Vice-President and President, from fifty-two to sixty-five. 1787 to 1800.

VI. His demeanor in private life, from sixty-five till nearly ninety-one, the close of all. 1800 to 1826.

## I.

## HIS CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

JOHN ADAMS was born October 19, 1735. His father, John Adams, then forty-four years old, and married but the year before, was a farmer, with small means, living in that part of Braintree now called Quincy; a farmer and a shoemaker at the same time, says the local tradition. When he died, in 1760, he left an estate of thirteen hundred and thirty pounds nine shillings and eightpence — about four or five thousand dollars in our money. He was an officer in the British militia, and for several years one of the Selectmen of the town, and also for many years a deacon of the church. He seems to have been a well-educated man, thoughtful, thrifty, careful, with considerable capacity, genuine piety, and great uprightness of character. Integrity is a virtue his son could inherit if virtue runs in families. John was the eldest child of this household, which, at length, counted twelve, — a number then not uncommon. Of his childhood and early youth I find nothing on record. In his sixteenth year he entered Harvard College. He had studied with two tutors — Mr. Cleverly, the Episcopalian Minister of the town, and Mr. Marsh, the reader at the Episcopal Church. Slender help it was that he got from them. He was

graduated at Harvard College in 1755, ranking as fourteenth in a class of twenty-four. In the classes the precedence was dependent upon the social condition of the parents; and as to that, his mother, a Boylston from Brookline, seems to have been considered of higher family than that of the deacon, his father. The learning he brought out of college would not now qualify a boy to enter there. But it appears that he stood well in his scholarship. Certainly he had "small Latin, and less Greek." A year after his graduation I find him studying Virgil, mastering thirty lines in one day, and "about forty" the next, in the precious spare time left to him by his more serious work. Three years later he is reading Horace. In 1760 he writes in his Diary, "In consequence of the ignorance of parents, masters Cleverly, Marsh, Waters, Mayhew, &c., and by reason of the ignorance of my instructors in the more advanced years of my life, my mind has lain uncultured, so that at twenty-five I am obliged to study Homer and Horace. *Proh dolor!*" Certainly he got little classic culture from Harvard then. Yet his class contained men afterwards distinguished, who, perhaps, got less even than he. The standard of what was called Education, was then exceeding low. But then, as now, scholarship and manhood were different things, and did not always ride in the same panniers. Presently, after graduating, he went to



Worcester to keep a common school, which was kept continuously throughout the year, in a town of perhaps fifteen hundred inhabitants, where he seems to have taught all disciples, from A, B, C, upwards to Latin and Greek, or as far as his pupils could go. He thought his labor was great, and his pay small. He "boards round," as the phrase was then; a little while here, a little while there. It was the custom of the times. I do not find exactly what his salary was, but the town had several district schools, each keeping part of the year, and raised but seventy pounds, or two hundred and thirty-three dollars forty-four cents, for the support of them all. Adams's share could not have been more than one hundred and twenty-five dollars, or perhaps one hundred and fifty dollars, in addition to his board. He does not like the business, and now and then grumbles about it. "The mischievous tricks, the perpetual invincible prate, and the stupid dulness of my scholars, roused my passions."\* His situation was extremely irksome. He says, "The school is indeed a school of affliction. A large number of little nurslings, just capable of lisping A, B, C, and troubling the master." Some one tells him he may make those little creatures "plants of renown," and "cedars of Lebanon." But Mr.

\* Adams's *Life of Adams*, ii. 88; i. 22. See, too, *Talk of J. Q. Adams about that*, ib.

Adams tells him "that keeping this school any length of time would make a base weed and ignoble shrub of me." He kept it nearly three years, however, and yet grew up to a pretty respectable tree, not yet done blossoming in the Politics of America, but still fresh and vigorous as a hundred years ago. It came of good seed that tree. The people of the town pleased him no better. "All the conversation was dry disputes upon politics and rural obscene wit." Yet there were intelligent and reading men in the little village. Mr. Adams's proclivity to grumble appears early. How he kept school I know not. But as he went for two years, and staid more than three, it would appear he surpassed other teachers.

He must choose a profession, this young Hercules. His father intended him for the Christian Ministry. His uncle Joseph, the eldest of his grandfather's twelve children, had before him entered that profession. The pulpit then absorbed most of the best talent of New England, which now runs away from it with swift acceleration. His nature inclined him to become a minister, for he was a devout man, severe in his morality, warring against all the sins of passion, austere, fond of theological books and of ecclesiastical ceremonies. But he had a profound need of looking all important things in the face, and taking nothing on hearsay, or at second hand.

He was possessed with a love of freedom, and a contempt for all bigots and haters of mankind. It soon appeared clearly that a New England pulpit was no place for him. He became acquainted with a noble, generous young man, of fine genius, admirable culture, who aspired to the best parish in the Province. But he was suspected of Arminianism, and accordingly "despised by some, ridiculed by others, and detested by most." "People are not disposed to inquire for piety, integrity, good sense, or learning in a young preacher, but for stupidity (for so I must call the pretended sanctity of some absolute dunces), irresistible grace, and original sin." So he wrote on his twenty-first birthday: "The pulpit is no place for you, young man! and the sooner you give up all thoughts of it the better for you, though the worse for it, and for all such as look up to it." His attention was called to the profession of medicine, boarding as he did with Dr. Willard, who "had a large practice, a good reputation for skill, and a pretty library." He read a good deal in Cheyne, Sydenham, Van Swieten, but turned away his eyes from the healing art. Nay, he seriously thought of the opposite art — that of killing. "Nothing but want of interest and patronage prevented me from enlisting in the army. Could I have obtained a troop of horse or a company of foot, I should infallibly have been a

soldier.”\* It was in 1756, the time of the French War, and all New England blazed with military ardor. Trade and farming attracted his attention, but he finally fixed his eyes upon the Law, and determined on that for his calling. On his twenty-first birthday, in the same letter before quoted, he writes, “If I can gain the honor of treading in the rear, and silently admiring the noble air and gallant achievements of the foremost rank, I shall think myself worthy of a louder triumph than if I had headed the whole army of Orthodox preachers.† The study and practice of law, I am sure, does not dissolve the obligations of morality or of Religion.”

So he agrees to study with a Mr. Putnam, a thriving lawyer of Worcester, for two years, and to pay him one hundred dollars for the instruction when he may become able to pay the debt. Here he continued till October, 1758, keeping school six hours a day, and studying Law most of the spare time, as his health and temper allowed. His educational helps at Worcester were not to be despised. There were several educated and thoughtful men there, who had broken away from the ecclesiastical chains which yet bound so many. The war forced men to think and discuss great matters, the result of which is re-

\* Letter of October 19, 1756, Works i. 36; and also letter of March 13, 1817, p. 38.

† Works, i. 37, and ii. 31.

flected in one of his earliest letters. He read the works of some thoughtful men, — Lord Bacon, Bolingbroke, Morgan, Bishop Butler, not less than Tillotson and Baxter. The influence of the Freethinkers, Bolingbroke and Morgan, is obvious and decisive.

He studied laboriously the law books deemed essential in those days, some of which look rather frightful to young lawyers now that the legal road is straightened, smoothed, and made easy. He loves to go to the original source of things. This appears in his early habits of study. But he had great difficulties to contend with, whereof poverty was the least. His Diary tells us what he thought of himself. He affected wit and humor. His attention was unsteady and irregular. "He had a remarkable absence of mind, a morose and unsocial disposition." He complains of his own idleness, late rising, waste of time in day-dreams, and gallavantiing the girls. This latter annoyed him for a long time, till he remedied that mischief in the most natural way. He charges himself with "rash and profane swearing," with "virulence" against divers people. But his intense vanity was his greatest foe in early life. "Vanity," writes the candid youth of twenty, "is my cardinal vice and cardinal folly."\* Envy, likewise, gnawed at the heart of the poor lad; but he keeps free from the vices of passion.

\* Works, ii. 16, 25, and elsewhere.



## II.

## HIS LIFE AS A LAWYER. 1758-1774.

After his two years of study at Worcester, he returns to Braintree, is admitted to practice in the Superior Court of Massachusetts, October 5, 1758, and establishes himself as a lawyer in his native village. But his legal education is only begun. In the midst of internal difficulties, he toils away at his work, not without sighing for his old school at Worcester, which he so much disliked while there. His plan of legal study was quite comprehensive. He wished to understand Natural Law, which is justice, and so would study the great writers on Ethics, the Common Law of England, and the Statutes, and also the Civil Law of Rome, which has had such influence on the administration of Justice throughout all Christendom. Such study demanded the reading of many books — a weariness to his flesh; for he was lazy and impetuous by turns, and unfit for the scholar's slow, silent work. But his ambition was intense and persistent, though he grumbled at the difficulty of studying Law while practising it during "a rambling, roving, vagrant, vagabond life," "of here and everywhere." His townsmen were disposed to honor their young lawyer a little. They therefore elected



him one of the highway Surveyors, and he willingly undertook the business of mending the roads of Braintree — his first official work. His first cause in court was a failure. His writ was ill drawn. He feared it would be so, and did not wish to undertake it; but the "cruel reproaches of my mother," and other considerations, misled him. However, he overcame his own defeat, and after some years had a considerable business. Still his reputation grew slowly.

On the 25th of October, 1764, he married Miss Abigail Smith, daughter of Rev. Mr. Smith, minister of Weymouth, a town adjoining Braintree, and then he commenced housekeeping on his own account. The course of true love, it seems, had its troubles in his, as in many cases. Mr. Smith held his daughter in high consideration. He had married the daughter of Colonel John Quincy, who was of an aristocratic Braintree family, having some property, and being a good deal engrossed in the public affairs of the Colony. Her grandmother was named Norton, and came from the town of Hingham, Massachusetts, and was of the same family as the famous John Norton, a dreadful minister of Ipswich, and afterwards of Boston, who helped to hang the Quakers. John Norton was a man very pious, it was said, but in his case, it was "grace grafted on a crab stock." She was also a daughter of the minister at

Hingham, and descended from the famous Thomas Shepard, first minister of Newton, now Cambridge. These were the aristocracy and "first families" of that day. The minister and his daughters belonged to the West End of Weymouth, for even Weymouth had its West End at that time. But poor John Adams, a man of obscure descent, did not belong to the West End of anything. Should he be allowed to carry off such a prize? Tradition says the Reverend father thought not. He had three daughters, Mary, or, as she was then called, Polly, the elder, Abby, the middle one, and Betsey, the younger. Mr. Richard Cranch, also of Braintree, but born in England, was a man of some talents, with great mechanical skill, wherewith he had fought his own way to education, and had acquired reputation and some wealth as a lawyer. He also came a wooing at the same mansion, addressing himself to Miss Polly, while Mr. Adams made similar visits on behalf of Miss Abby. Mr. Cranch was warmly welcomed by the Reverend father. He treated him with great consideration. On Sunday nights, which were even then, as now, consecrated to the pious uses of the Religion of Young Hearts, Mr. Cranch's horse was well cared for at the parochial barn, and he was himself treated with great kindness and consideration in the parochial house. But John Adams was thought a disloyal subject by the minister; hot, impetuous, impatient, uncertain,

with nothing on hand, and no decided future. So, while the daughter smiled, the father frowned on the poor, obscure lover. He treated him rudely, neglected him, overlooked and annoyed him not a little. His horse ate hay on Sunday night. Of course all the little country parish knew how his affairs were going on in the minister's family, and the story soon spread to the regions round about.

Mr. Smith had told each of his daughters that the Sunday before their marriage he would preach them a sermon, from whatever text they should choose. When Mr. Cranch was ready, Miss Polly selected "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." John and Abby were both present to hear the discourse, and all the parish sat and listened with greedy wonder. The old gentleman expatiated upon the "good part." It was OBEEDIENCE. He dwelt with great unction on the necessity of obedience on the part of children to their parents. It was especially important that daughters should obey in *all* things; and more particularly in the matter of selecting a husband. "And Mary hath chosen that good part." But, in due time, Mr. Adams also had a cage ready for the minister's second bird. Abby must choose her text, the bright girl. She took, "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil." The old man objected, but the daughter would not be entreated, and he

preached on the text in the case of the aforesaid John and Abby, and to the no little delight of the parish.\*

Miss Abby was an admirable woman, religious without fanaticism or bigotry, affectionate as wife and mother, conscientious to the last degree, but not at all austere; thrifty, wise, prudent, and forecasting, and with calm, cool judgment, which saw the right proportion of all things. If Adams was not blessed in his courtship, he was in his marriage. Few men had ever a nobler mate. He long afterwards writes of his marriage, that it was "the source of all" his "felicity." Her education was quite scanty and irregular; she was never sent to school, but picked up a little here and there. She read a few books, chiefly poetical, it seems; but the *Spectator* was among them. So were the historic plays of Shakespeare, and perhaps the others. These were faithfully read, judiciously pondered over, and abundantly quoted during all her life, in her letters. She said herself, —

"The little knowledge I have gained  
Was all from simple nature drained." †

\* The story is differently told by other authorities.

† Her father, a cautious man, taught, above all things, never to speak ill of anybody; to say all the handsome things she could of persons, but no evil. But her grandfather, John Quincy, was remarkable for never praising anybody; he did not often speak evil, but he seldom spoke well. *Adams's Works*, ii. 306.

The education of women was greatly neglected in New England by the Puritans. Mrs. Hutchinson had made them afraid of her strong and subtle mind, accomplished with conscientious culture. In Adams's youth it was fashionable to ridicule "female learning."

After his marriage to the minister's daughter of Weymouth, the descendant from such reverend ancestors, his profession and business received a considerable increase. A year or two later his townsmen honored him by making him one of the Selectmen of Braintree. He entered upon his office the 4th of March, 1766. He mentions the fact with hearty exultation, not thinking of another Fourth of March, thirty-one years later, General Washington and fifteen States in the background. For four generations some of his family had been members of the board of Selectmen. Before long he became well known in the county. He took lively interest in opposing the Stamp Act, and got a town meeting called at Braintree, to instruct her representative in the General Court to oppose this wicked measure, and resist its execution. He drafted the Resolutions, and the town meeting passed them unanimously. Forty other towns soon accepted them without alteration. They contain brave words, thoughtfully spoken at the right time.\* His celebrated Revolutionary kinsman,

\* Works, iii. p. 465. See, especially, 467, third paragraph.



Samuel Adams, adopted some of his paragraphs, and the town of Boston, in Faneuil Hall, then said "Ay." In the midst of the Stamp Act trouble, 22d December, 1765, Forefathers' Day, Sunday, he writes in his journal, "At home with my family, thinking;" and again, Christmas Day, "At home, thinking, reading, searching concerning taxation without consent; concerning the great pause and rest in business."\*

There was great matter for him to think of. New England stood at the threshold of Revolution, and only Samuel Adams and a few more saw where the next step would be. As the people would not accept the stamps, the courts of justice were all closed. Boston asked the Governor and Council to open the courts, and chose Mr. Gridley, James Otis, and John Adams to defend their position. It was a great honor for the young men, Otis and Adams, to be employed in such a cause, and to be associated with such counsel as Gridley, the ablest lawyer and the most elegant speaker in New England.† This was "the matter" he was "thinking" about. He believes the people showed cowardice by this inactivity, and too much respect for the Act.‡ He says the lawyers, most of them, became Tories and went down to Halifax. "The bar seem to behave like a flock of shot pigeons!" "The net seems to be

\* Works, ii. 162-164.

† See Works, i. 76; ii. 165.

‡ Works, ii. 155.



thrown over them, and they have scarcely courage left to flounce and to flutter.”\* The “Sons of Liberty” were made of other stuff, and so was John Adams.

But the Stamp Act troubles got ended by the repeal of the law in 1766. “It was founded on a mistaken principle.” But the Massachusetts Legislature had already taken the first needful step of Revolution, and had called a Convention of delegates. All the Colonial Legislatures had been summoned to meet at New York on the first Tuesday of October, 1765.†

In the spring of 1768 Mr. Adams removed his family to Boston, living in Brattle Square. Governor Bernard offered him a considerable place in the Government, — the office of Advocate General. Adams at once refused it. He was poor: this offered him money. He was ambitious: this assured him respect and high consideration, and opened the road to all honor. But he was just, and said, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Nay, he would not ask to be appointed Justice of the Peace, so cautious was he of receiving favors which might bias his judgment. Yet he took no active part in politics, would not speak at the Boston town meetings, then so frequent and important. He would not even attend

\* Works, ii. 156.

† Works, i. p. 68, 109.

them. He devoted himself to his profession and to the support of his family. Yet he was popular with the Patriotic party. The Sons of Liberty came at night and serenaded him in his house, close to the main guard of the British soldiers, who had then been quartered upon the suspected and rebellious town. He was placed on the Committee to prepare instructions for James Otis, Thomas Cushing, Samuel Adams, and John Hancock, the Boston Representatives.

On March 5, 1770, the Boston Massacre, so called, occurred. Captain Preston, who commanded, and the six soldiers who fired the fatal shot, were arrested and held in jail, to be tried for murder. They applied to Mr. Adams to defend them. He consented, against the advice of all his friends. He induced Mr. Josiah Quincy, Jr., to aid in the defence. Distinguished lawyers had declined to help the soldiers, for they feared the popular opinion, which demanded their blood. His acceptance of this duty was a most unpopular act, making him suspected of favoring the Government whose soldiers he was called upon to defend. It was considered "ruinous" for him. A great clamor was raised against him. He managed the case skilfully. All were acquitted of the charge of murder, two only found guilty of manslaughter. Thus far this was the most valiant deed of his life. It cost him fourteen or fifteen days of

most arduous work, and the sum received in payment of all his labor and success was nineteen guineas, say, ninety-five dollars!\*

While the case was still pending, he was chosen one of the Representatives of the town of Boston to the great Convention, 16th of June, 1770. I believe Samuel Adams brought this to pass. Now, for the first time, is he really committed to the Politics of the People. "I consider the step as a devotion of my family to ruin, and of myself to death," said he.† "At this time I had more business at the bar than any man in the Province. My health was feeble, and I was throwing away as bright prospects as any man ever had before him. I had devoted myself to endless labor and anxiety, if not to infamy and to death, and that for nothing, except what indeed was, and ought to be all in all, a sense of duty." He told his wife; she saw the peril, burst into tears, and said, the noble woman, "You have done as you ought, and I am willing to share in all that is to come, and to place my trust in Providence."‡

Soon after, the Boston Representatives, or, as they were then called, "the Boston Seat," raised some controversy with the Governor. Governor Shirley,

\* Works, i. 104, 110; ii. 229.

† Works, ii. 232; i. 106. See remarks of John Quincy Adams.

‡ Works, ii. 232.

then living in retirement at Roxbury, hearing of it, asked, "Who are the Boston Seat?" He was told, "Mr. Cushing, Mr. Hancock, Mr. Samuel Adams, and Mr. John Adams." The old Governor replied, "Mr. Cushing I know, and Mr. Hancock I know, but where the devil this brace of Adamses come from I know not." Had he lived a little longer, he might have found out where they went to, taking the Nation with them.\*

In the General Court, John Adams was of great service to the Patriots. They needed an able and ready lawyer. Thatcher was dead; Otis was worse than dead, the victim of his own intemperance and of the malignant blows of an assassin. Mr. Hawley, one of the ablest and most far-sighted men in the Province, lived at Northampton, and was, moreover, too melancholy for a principal leader in the General Court. John Adams seemed made for the vacant place — a skilful lawyer on the People's side. You find his name on most of the important committees, and the marks of his pen, his thought and technical skill, in the chief papers of that session. But his health failing, he declined reëlection, and retired to his farm at Braintree, still keeping his office in Boston, determined to avoid politics altogether. But his profession, nature, and the circumstances of the

\* He died March 24, 1771.

times, were too strong for him. He must take sides with the people, and against the officers of the Crown; and I find his busy pen writing articles for the newspapers in the great controversy of the day.

Though no longer in the General Court, it seems that he drafted the most important paper on the Great Question of those times, and was called upon to defend it. This he promptly and ably did; \* and Hutchinson was foiled in his attempt to prove the legal right of Parliament to tax the Colonies, or to rule them against their consent. Then came (1773) Dr. Franklin's exposure of the letters of Hutchinson and Oliver, who had suggested to the British Government that in New England "there must be an abridgment of what we call British liberties." The wrath of the people was fairly stirred by this adroit movement of Franklin reaching across the sea.†

May 25, 1773, was Election day in Massachusetts. The House of Representatives chose John Adams as one of the Council. Governor Hutchinson, who hated him bitterly, put his negative on the choice, because of "the very conspicuous part he had taken in opposition to the Government." But soon the General Court addressed the King, asking him to remove Governor Hutchinson and Lieutenant

\* Works, i. 118; ii. 310.

† See ante, page 28.



Governor Oliver, both Massachusetts men, both traitors. Hutchinson went to London to confer with the British Government, but he never saw his native land again.\* No patriotic eye drops a tear on the neglected grave of the New England man whose splendid talents and popular eloquence were devoted to the ruin of his native land, and who struggled violently to put a chain on the neck of his fellow-countrymen. Hutchinson had prevented Adams from being one of the Honorable Council; but, before the eye of the world, he himself soon became unknown, and trampled in the dust.

The British Government wished to control the judges. It is an old trick. "Let me interpret the laws, I care not who makes them," is the motto of tyrants to this very day. Of course the judges were willing: when were they otherwise? But the people of *that day* refused to have a chain of gold put round the court-house by the King, under which all his creature Judges must crawl as they went in. One Chief Justice, without performing any of the duties of his office, actually took the royal salary for eighteen months afterwards. Three of the puisné judges could not be relied upon. The House adjourned the General Court, and asked the Governor to remove the Chief Justice. The Governor

\* Adams's Works, i. 135.



forbade the adjournment, and refused the removal. What should be done? Should such a Judge, who himself is the King's slave, hold a court, and determine the law for freemen? In 1773 wise men thought that such folly would be ruin! John Adams said, "Impeach the Chief Justice.\* The Charter of William and Mary gives the House of Representatives the power." Other lawyers — lawyers are always a timid class of men, their maxim being "stare decisis" — hesitated. They "did not know;" "there was no American precedent." John Adams was not only careful to follow the old precedents that were good, but also to make the good precedents that we use now. The Chief Justice was impeached; ninety-two to eight in the House of Representatives. When Jurors came into the Courts of Suffolk County they would not be sworn. Said they, "We shall not sit under a Judge impeached of high crimes and misdemeanors." Jurors did the same all over the State. The Royal Court never sat again. Nay, there were no courts till after April 19, 1775, when the Provincial Government set things on their feet again. Here was a deadlock for the Government. Hutchinson and Oliver, and their gang of Tories, were routed in the House, routed in the Courts, and routed before the People.

\* Adams's Works, ii. 329.

It was the beginning of the end; but, generally, men did not see it, only such men as Samuel Adams, Joseph Hawley, and the far-sighted Franklin, already advising a General Congress.\* Adams, then thirty-eight years old, was the ablest lawyer in New England, perhaps in America. He had the right thought at the right time, and the courage to make that thought a thing. Shall such a man be left "to live on potatoes and Indian meal" at Braintree, with nothing to do? Massachusetts thought otherwise.

### III.

#### MR. ADAMS AS A POLITICIAN IN THE AMERICAN CONGRESS. 1774-1777.

The Boston Port Bill, and other revengeful acts, were passed through the Parliament of Great Britain in March, 1774. In the following 13th May, General Gage, the Military Governor of Massachusetts, came to Boston with his army, to dragoon the people into submission. As the Judges were impeached, the Courts were all closed, business was at an end, and grass growing on the Long Wharf. Adams did not receive a shilling a week from his profession.

\* Adams's Works, i. 134.

The 17th of June is a marked epoch in American History. On that day, 1774, the General Court, in session at Salem, sat with its doors bolted fast. "No man must go out to tell what they are doing, nor come in to interrupt them." They chose, by a vote of one hundred and seventeen ayes to twelve nays, James Bowdoin, Thomas Cushing, Robert Treat Paine, Samuel Adams, and John Adams, as delegates to the Continental Congress, to meet at Philadelphia on the first of the next September. Adams doubted his own ability, doubted the Nation's genius.\* Mr. Bowdoin did not attend. He had too much money to risk in such an enterprise, too much respectability to be a member of a Revolutionary Congress.

The four delegates rode to Philadelphia in a coach — "four poor pilgrims." Their journey through New England was a triumphal procession. At New Haven they visited the grave of Dixwell the Regicide. A significant visit that was to the tomb of one of the fifty-two, who said, "Off with the head of Charles Stuart. He is not fit to live, and enslave Englishmen." Until he reached New York

\* Adams's Works, i. 148. "We have not men fit for the times. We are deficient in genius, in education, in travel, in fortune, in everything. I feel unutterable anxiety. God grant us wisdom and fortitude! Should the opposition be suppressed, should this country submit, what infamy and ruin! God forbid! Death, in any form, is less terrible." Also, Works ii. 338.

at this time, Adams had never been out of New England.

In Congress the New England delegates had a very difficult part to perform. They were regarded with great distrust. First, they were Puritan people; second, they were thought desirous of breaking with the British Government, and aiming at Independence. Virginia alone stood with New England. All the other States looked on with suspicion, especially New York and Pennsylvania. This was the problem: To have New England ideas prevail without putting forward New England men. Samuel Adams was the most far-sighted and revolutionary man then in the Nation. None surpassed him in the great art of organizing men, of leading the unwilling, while he seemed only to follow. At first the two Adamases did not seem to have much influence. They were looked on with great suspicion. At length it turned out that they put their ideas into all the rest. But, at the beginning, Virginia was nearly as far advanced as New England. Richard Henry Lee stood side by side with Samuel Adams. "The grave, stern figure" of George Washington was not far off. There he was, at the second session, after the battle of Lexington, symbolically clad in his military uniform, a sword at his side, the thoughtful Colonel, who spoke in deeds, not words.

John Adams continued as a member of Congress

from September, 1774, till November, 1777. The first session lasted but eight weeks — consulting, making a Declaration of Rights and Grievances, and preparing Petitions and Memorials to the British Government and people. On the 10th of May it assembled again. During his service in that body Mr. Adams tried to induce Congress to adopt the Massachusetts Army, — which had been gathered after the battle of Lexington, — to make the fight national, and to put that gallant son of Virginia, George Washington, at its head; thus to gain that great State of Virginia, and all the Southern States, so that they should make common cause with New England; to advise the individual States to annihilate their old Provincial Governments and dependence on Great Britain, and to make a new Constitutional Government of their own; to declare Independence; to unite the States into one Confederation; to make alliances with Foreign Nations, and to establish a Navy.

It was a difficult matter to accomplish all this, but it was done; partly by John Adams's ardent vigor; partly by the admirable resource and persuasive talent of Samuel Adams, so ably helped by Richard Henry Lee, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and others; partly by the quiet diligence and immense intellect of Dr. Franklin. But at this day it is impossible to tell in detail what each man did. Congress sat with



closed doors. The journals gave nothing but reports, and these in the most official and meagre form. Mr. Adams's Diary, his own letters, and those of others, help to eke out the scanty record.

The Declaration of Rights and Grievances, October 18, 1774, was one of the most important documents of the Revolutionary Congress. Mr. Adams drafted it, and was the author of its most important parts. He seems to have had something to do with composing the Declaration of Independence. A copy of the original draft is still extant in his handwriting, and in England another copy in Franklin's, it is said.\* John Adams was the chief orator in defence of the Declaration, and of Independence itself ("the Colossus of that debate"), but no vestige of his speech remains. He drew up the rules and regulations for the Navy, the foundation of the present naval code; also he drafted the Articles of War. We must thank him for selecting George Washington to be the Commander-in-Chief of the Army.† Mr. Hancock, it seems, wanted the office, and never forgave Adams for placing Colonel Washington in it. But afterwards John Adams, like Samuel Adams, and many others, had at times some distrust of Washington. It was not to be wondered at; not surprising that such should have been the case.

\* Works, i. 232.

† Works, i. 175, 245, 265; ii. 415.



In several things Adams ran before the mass of the leaders in Congress. He did not wish the vote to be by States, for this gave to Delaware and Rhode Island as much power as to Virginia and Massachusetts. He did not hope much good from the shortsighted agreement not to import from Great Britain, and not to export to her shores. He saw the importance of a Navy, perhaps before any other member of Congress, and he decidedly favored a Military Academy.

He labored hard in three years of his service. He was chairman of twenty-five Committees, and served likewise on sixty-five more. This does not include a number of committees as to which the names of the members are not recorded in the journals of Congress. For a long time he was chairman of the Board of War, performing the work of the Secretary of War under the Revolutionary Government. Yet he was never a recognized leader in Congress. His rapid, impatient mind disdained the intermediate steps in the slow process of attaining great ends. But he really led men, the course of events greatly aiding him. Still, in the march of Independence, he never shot so far before the rest as his deep-hearted and more silent kinsman, Samuel Adams, nor had he such insight into the rights of the people as Jefferson, nor yet had he such confidence in them. Besides, Adams was capricious, and in the most criti-

cal period of the Revolution, while chairman of the Board of War, he absented himself from Congress nearly four months, from October 13, 1776, to February 9, 1777 — a period full of terrible defeats, though enlightened by the brilliant actions at Trenton and Princeton. He was not conciliatory in word or deed.

He left Congress on the 11th of November, 1777, and returned home. While a member of Congress, he was at the same time one of the Selectmen of the town of Braintree, and successively a member of the General Court and of a Council of his native State, and was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, October, 28, 1775.\* He accepted the office though he never entered on its duties or received any salary. He wrote an admirable Proclamation to the People of his State, full of sound principles of Government, and addressing itself to the nobler emotions of Humanity.† In the newspapers of Boston he also wrote some able papers in defence of the Rights of the Colonists. But the most valuable document he wrote in this period of his life was his "Thoughts on Government," published in 1776 — a work which seems to have had much influence upon the Forms of Government which the Colonies adopted.‡

\* Works, iii. 23.

† Works, i. 191, and onward.

‡ Works, iv. 183-209. See the other references in the Index at end of volume x.

## IV.

## MR. ADAMS'S CAREER AS A POLITICIAN AND DIPLOMATIST IN EUROPE. 1778-1787.

In November, 1777, while Mr. Adams, a member of Congress, but absent on leave, was arguing a cause in the Admiralty Court at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, he was told by a friend that he (Mr. Adams) was appointed one of the Commissioners to France, in place of Silas Deane, whose conduct forced Congress to recall him. James Lovell, one of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, wrote him, "We want one man of inflexible integrity on the Embassy."\* To accept the office was to risk great difficulty and danger. The chance of capture in crossing the ocean, and of living for a long time shut up in the Tower as a Rebel, was great. The payment was little for a poor man with a large family. But it opened a wide field for his ambition, and what was still more with him, Duty said, "Go," and he went.† He left home 13th of February, 1778, and reached Paris, April 8. But the Commercial Treaty and Alliance between France and America had been skilfully made before he reached there. He found American affairs in no little confusion, and a great

\* Works, i. 275.

† Works, iii. 89.

deal of quarrelling among the agents — Deane, Franklin, Izard, and the two Lees. He hastened to bring matters to better order, and partly succeeded. A new disposition of diplomatic offices was made. Franklin became sole Minister to France, and Adams, thus left without place or duty, soon returned home. He reached Boston, August 2, 1779; the next week was elected a delegate for Braintree to the Convention presently to assemble, and to form the Constitution of Massachusetts. It met at Cambridge, September 1, 1779, and immediately resolved that they would proceed "to establish a free Republic," and that the principle of it should be, "The Government of a People by fixed laws of their own making." A Committee of thirty-one was chosen to draft a Constitution. They chose a sub-committee of five to do the work, and these five delegated it to Mr. Adams. There were already two parties in the new State — a party of Property, represented by James Bowdoin, who could not go to Congress because he had great riches; and a party of Persons, represented by Samuel Adams, who had done more than any one man to consummate the ideas of the New England leaders, and to advance the progress of Revolution. John Adams stood between these two parties, desiring to give a due share both to money and to numbers. He drafted

the first Constitution of Massachusetts. It was not greatly altered in the large committee, or in the Convention. He also took the most prominent part in forming the Political Institutions of Massachusetts, and so he influenced the forms of Government of all the many States which have since copied its provisions. I think this was one of the most important acts of his life.\*

But he never sat in the Convention; for before it reassembled, in October, he had been appointed one of the Ministers to treat with Great Britain, and to negotiate, first, a Treaty of Peace, and, second, a Treaty of Commerce. Attended by his oldest son, — John Quincy Adams, then only promising what he afterwards so successfully performed, — he sailed for Europe, November 13, 1779, and reached Paris (viâ Spain), February 5, 1780. He had a disagreement with Dr. Franklin, then Minister at Paris, and with the Comte de Vergennes, the actual Chief of the French Government under Louis the Sixteenth. He could not proceed to England, and Vergennes advised him not to announce the fact of his approach to the British Court till a more favorable opportunity should occur. He was greatly irritated at this, and seems to have disturbed the affairs that he was sent to compose. He wrote important articles on America, and had them published in the

\* Works, i. 284; iv. 213-219.



semi-official Journal — the “*Mercure de France*.” A mutual animosity between Adams and Vergennes continued during all his residence in France, not well founded on either side.\*

July 27, 1780, he went to Holland, to ascertain if he could borrow money for the United States. His hopeful mind made things look more promising than he afterwards found them to be. He had important articles published in the Dutch journals, giving information respecting American affairs, artfully getting some of them first published in London. He wrote a work, then published for the first time, but often afterwards, entitled, “Twenty-six Letters upon interesting Subjects respecting the Revolution of America.” † They were admirably suited to the time and place, and greatly helped the cause of America. He informed the Dutch Government, January 1, 1781, ‡ of his appointment as Minister Plenipotentiary to their Court, and presented them a memorial, asking to be recognized as such. As they were slow to respond to his claim, he appealed to the Dutch people, and had his memorial widely circulated among them. Strange as it may seem, this extraordinary appeal succeeded. The Independent Provinces, one by one, demanded his reception, and on the 19th of April, 1782, the authorities voted

\* Works, i. 298, 312, 321, 334.

† Works, vii. 265.

‡ Works, i. 333.



that he be recognized as Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States of America. The Government at first was hostile to him, for Holland was under English influence, and Adams frankly acknowledged this as the greatest success of his life. Soon after he procured a loan of about two millions of dollars, and subsequently yet others, which were of the greatest service at a time when the United States could get no more credits from France.\* Still further, he negotiated a treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States and Holland, October 7, 1782.† In the mean time, July, 1781, at Paris, he had taken part in the negotiations for Peace with Great Britain, under the mediation of Austria and Russia, but it all came to nothing. After finishing his admirable successes in Holland, October 26, 1782, he is again at Paris, with Franklin and Jay, to negotiate a definitive treaty of peace between Great Britain and the United States. It was a long and difficult matter, full of complication and confusion. Both Franklin and Jay had great talents — Franklin a genius for diplomacy, furnished with more than twenty years of experience at European Courts during times of the greatest trial. But it must be confessed that the quick, wide-seeing intelligence of John Adams — his energy, his boldness, and his irresistible will — were of great service in

\* Works, i. 340.

† Works, i. 350-352.

securing the Rights of America in that negotiation. On 30th November, 1782, the treaty was signed without the knowledge of the French Court. The French Government had been so treacherous, that the American Commissioners departed from their instructions from Congress, and finished the treaty without the knowledge of the Comte de Vergennes. June 21, 1783, it was signed by the authorities of France, England, and America, and Peace was definitively restored.\* Mr. Adams resigned his offices, hoping to return home; but Congress appointed him, with Franklin and Jay, Commissioner to negotiate a Treaty of Commerce with Great Britain.

Exhausted by labor and racked by a fever, Adams went to England in a private capacity, and was admitted to the House of Lords as the "Friend of Lord Mansfield." The next day some one said to him, "How short a time since I heard that same Lord Mansfield say, in that same House of Lords, 'My Lords, if you do not kill him (Mr. Adams), he will kill you'?" Mr. West, the American painter, said this "scene would make one of the finest paintings in the progress of American Independence." In the winter, he hurried over to Holland, to negotiate a new loan, and succeeded in the midst of difficulties, caused by the rashness or dishonesty of the American

\* Works, i. 386-398.

Government in recklessly overdrawing their credits on Holland.\*

He assisted in making other treaties with Sweden and with Prussia, the latter being the celebrated one, which does such honor to Dr. Franklin. Adams continued to live in the neighborhood of Paris, where his wife and family joined him in the summer of 1784. Here he passed, perhaps, the happiest period of his life. John Quincy Adams, a promising lad of seventeen, now and then shows himself in the formal letters of his father and mother. But halcyon days are few. February 25, 1785, he was appointed Envoy to Great Britain. Vergennes said to him, "It is a great thing to be an ambassador from your country to the country you sprang from. It is a mark!" The Duke of Dorset said, "You will be much stared at." In May, he went to London as Minister. He was presented to the King in his closet; only Lord Caermarthen was present. Adams made the three reverences, and said, "I think myself more fortunate than all my fellow-citizens, in having the distinguished honor to be the first to stand in your Majesty's royal presence in a diplomatic character." The King said, "I was the last to consent to separation, but I will be the first to meet the friendship of the United States as an independent power." Both were

\* Works, i. 413, 414.

greatly moved, the King the most. In conversation afterwards, the King told him he understood he was not much attached to the manners of France. Adams smartly answered, "I have no attachment but to my country;" whereto the King replied, as quick as lightning, "An honest man will never have any other!"\* But this interview did not prevent the King from publicly turning his back on the American Commissioners, Adams and Jefferson! Whereupon all respectability turned its pliant back.

Adams's condition in England was unhappy. America was treated as rebellious, and despised for her weakness; shall I not also say, for the dishonorable manner in which the Americans refused to pay their debts. He met with cold and formal civility, "such as only the English know how, in perfection, to make offensive." "No marked offence, but supercilious indifference!" No treaty of Commerce could then be made. The King was cold, his family cold, the courtiers cold, all respectability cold: only a few Dissenters and Democrats were on his side. The British appointed no Minister to America. Adams resigned his office, and came home in 1788. But before he left England, he published an important work, — his "Defence of the American Constitution," — which had a good deal of influence throughout the United States.

\* Works, i. 419; viii. 256.

## V.

## MR. ADAMS IN THE EXECUTIVE OF THE UNITED STATES. 1787-1800.

Mr. Adams left America in the dark hours of 1779. All was then uncertain. America might fail in contending with her gigantic foe. He came back in a cloudy day of 1788; it might turn out to be a stormy one. For though the foreign foe was overcome, the domestic trouble from ourselves was by no means so easily disposed of. Property and persons were less safe in the States after the Peace, than in the five years before the outbreak of the Revolution. The States were not so prosperous as the Colonies. The Provisional Government which had carried the Country through the Revolution was falling to pieces. The new Federal Government was not yet established. One by one the States, led by reluctant Massachusetts, tardily gave in their consent to a form of National Government. The Federal Constitution then offered to the People of America for their adoption was the work of the merchants in the seaports, of the Southern planters, of the officers of the Revolution, of the Government officials, of the men of superior education, and of the prosperous classes in general. Shays' rebellion in Massachusetts frightened men who had the most intense demo-



cratic hostility to centralized power. So some of them assented to the New Constitution. Madison, Jefferson, Hancock, and Samuel Adams were types of this class. But many were hostile to it. Had it been put to a popular vote six months after the Convention adjourned, not a State, I think, had adopted the Constitution.

Great events march through gates which turn on little hinges. Upon Mr. Adams's return, the Constitution was adopted; a new Government organized.

The great officers were first to be chosen, President and Vice-President. There could be but one candidate for the highest place. Washington had all the sixty-nine Electoral votes. No doubt he should be the first man in the Nation. But the second would be a long way behind him. There were ten other competitors in the field. Mr. Adams had thirty-four votes; thirty-five were against him. He was elected Vice-President by a minority of votes. His most conspicuous rivals were Samuel Adams and John Hancock. But Alexander Hamilton was his chief opponent, and worked against him in his astute and secret way. The motives of Hamilton's conduct at this election are not yet quite apparent.

When John Adams took his oath of office, 21st April, 1789, it was not a bright sky that hung over him. He was not a member of the Cabinet. It was his office to preside in the Senate. That consisted



of twenty-two members, though only twenty were usually present. When that body was equally divided, which happened twenty times during the two years of the first Congress, he gave the casting vote. It was always then in favor of Washington's Administration, and the measures supported by the Federal party. He took sides with England, and not with France. But in the dull life of a Vice-President he found no scope for his special talents, which were power in debate and firmness in execution. Eight years this unhappy Theseus sat in the chair of the Senate, deciding points of order, and now and then giving a casting vote. Silence, calmness, impartiality, were chiefly required for that office. They were not his shining talents. He called his "the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived, or his imagination conceived."\* In a period of great excitement, 1789, he wrote the "Davila" papers, once read with intense wrath, and with unlimited delight, now dead, cold, neglected, and forgotten. Yet these writings were his most important contributions to the public service between 1789 and 1797.

He disliked two men, the most powerful in Washington's Cabinet; nay, he hated them! Jefferson, the Democrat, and Hamilton, the Federalist. But while he was Vice-President, he secured the friendly

\* Works, i. 460.

regards of both parties in the Senate, notwithstanding those stormy times.

When Washington withdrew from public office, Adams was the only man deemed by the Federal party fit to be elected President. But some of the Federalists, who were leading men in their party, thought that the British Government, with all its complicated establishments, was the best government that there was in the world, or that there ever would be. These men did not trust Mr. Adams, because his more transcendental theories of government displeased them. Hamilton, his old enemy, now worked in secret, and attempted to thrust him aside, while his great and more magnanimous opponent, Jefferson, appeared in open day — as a rival rather than as a foe. Adams had seventy-one votes, Jefferson had sixty-eight. So Adams was President and Jefferson Vice-President. Adams was much chagrined at his meagre majority, only one vote more than the bare number which the law required. He called himself a "President of three votes." He was sworn into the office on the 4th of March, 1797. Thirty-one years before, on that day, he entered on his duty as one of the honorable Selectmen of Braintree! There was now a less pleasant prospect before him. The retirement of Washington took away the last check which had curbed the frenzy of Federalists and Democrats.

On the day when he became Vice-President, and so, as chairman of the Senate, was obliged to declare his own election to the great office, his wife characteristically wrote him from her New England home, —

“ ‘The sun is dressed in brightest beams,  
To give thy honors to the day.’

“ My thoughts and meditations are with you, and my petitions to Heaven are that ‘the things which make for peace may not be hidden from your eyes.’ My feelings are not those of pride or ostentation upon the occasion. They are solemnized by a sense of the obligations, the important trusts, and numerous duties connected with it. That you may be enabled to discharge them with honor to yourself, with justice and impartiality to your country, and with satisfaction to this great people, shall be the daily prayer of your  
A. A.” \*

His position was exceedingly difficult.

I. The great strife between Federalists and Democrats was then at its height, while at the same time the wars in Europe roused the passions of all Americans, who fiercely took sides and embraced opposite opinions. The Democrats, however, were to triumph in the end. Nothing but reverence for Washington

\* Works, i. 496.

sustained the Federal party during the first four years, under the new Constitution. But Washington had now withdrawn, and to weaken yet more the Conservative cause, the Federalists had not entire confidence in Adams.

II. By his relation to his party, he felt bound to accept the feeble Cabinet which Washington had left in power: Pickering and Wolcott from New England, McHenry from New Jersey, and Charles Lee from Virginia. They had no hold on the country. By great services or great talent, they could give Adams no moral or political support. They were only qualified to conduct the routine of office, and to superintend official work.

III. These old officials felt no obligation to Adams, and bore no allegiance to him. Three of them were Hamilton's men, by him selected for General Washington, who had a misplaced confidence in Hamilton. Adams's Cabinet originally looked to Hamilton as their master and chief, not to the actual President. Their writings prove this. Adams wished to be President of the Nation. He found it impossible, because his Cabinet insisted that he should be President only of the Federal Party.

The chief acts of Adams's administration are briefly told. The French, in the fury of the Revolution, became hostile to America; treated our Ministers with contempt, ordering them out of their territory, plun-

dering our ships, and through their agents violating the sovereignty of our soil. There was danger of a war with France, and so it became necessary that the Nation should be put in a state of defence. The Ultra-Federalists wanted a war with France, and to compromise their differences with England. But the chief Democrats favored France, and hated England to an extraordinary degree. Adams, who was now the slave of a party, wished to act purely on the defensive. He broke with his Cabinet on the question of the command of the new army. All were agreed that Washington should be General-in-Chief. The Cabinet desired that Hamilton should be second in rank. Such was the ambitious claim of Hamilton himself; and Washington quietly favored it. Adams wished to commission Knox or Pinckney. After much contention, Adams yielded to Washington, but not graciously.

The French Court had rejected the American Minister. A most respectable commission, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Pinckney, and Mr. Gerry, were sent out to settle affairs. They, too, were treated with equal disdain. In a message to Congress, 21st of June, 1798, Mr. Adams said, "I will never send another Minister to France without assurance that he will be received, respected, and honored as the representative of a great, free, powerful, and independent nation." \*

\* Works, i. 519.



War seemed unavoidable. The Nation armed itself, and made ready for fight. The Dutch offered to mediate.\* The French agent advised Mr. Murray, our Minister at the Hague, that if the Americans should send a new envoy, he would be "received as the representative of a great, free, powerful, and independent nation." Should Adams refuse the offer? That were indeed madness. Should he consult his Cabinet? They were all in favor of war, and would betray the measure to other Federalists. They might, and probably would, defeat the peaceful policy he had determined to pursue. He took the responsibility upon himself, and on the 18th of February, 1799, he sent a message to the Senate, nominating Mr. William Vans Murray Minister to France, at the same time transmitting the despatch of Talleyrand, promising that France would receive an envoy from America. "Is Mr. Adams mad?" asked a Federal Senator of Mr. Pickering. The Federalists were indignant. The Senate committee on the nomination sought an interview; but they found the President as inflexible as the granite of his own native hills. He added Mr. Ellsworth and Patrick Henry to the commission. The Senate confirmed the nominations, but as Henry declined, George Davie, of North Carolina, was put in his place.

\* The French Government assumed a milder tone. They wished for reconciliation with America.



This was one of the great acts of his life ; no public deed cost him more courage. It saved the nation from a war, but it purchased for Adams the hatred of his party, at least of its controlling and most ambitious men. Though wisdom may ride in one pannier, the other is often heavy with folly. After this great deed, on March 10, 1799, Adams retired to his home at Quincy for more than seven months,\* abandoning the Government to his faithless Cabinet ; only occasionally corresponding with his Secretaries upon such matters as were submitted to him. He had afterwards much cause to repent that he had not during this period remained at the seat of Government, and in the control of its Executive affairs.

The Alien and Sedition Laws, so deservedly hateful to Americans, were the measures not of himself, but of his party. He assented to them, and so his was the blame ; but he never liked them, and pardoned John Fries, the first man ever tried for treason against the United States, if indeed he could be said to have been tried at all. This again brought on Adams the wrath of his Cabinet and of the leading men of his party.

Such, at last, became the discrepancy between him and his Cabinet, that he removed the chief men from office, filling their places with others of a different

\* Works, viii. 628, et seq. ; also, ix. 37 ; Gibbs, " Administrations," ii. 248.

stamp. He settled some complicated difficulties with both England and France. But his party was displeased with him. Some of them — Hamilton and others — sought to destroy him.

He was beaten at the next election. Jefferson was chosen President in his place. This was the great grief and sorrow of his life. He took what vengeance he could on his triumphant rival — once his intimate friend. Just as he was leaving office he filled up many new judicial appointments, then recently created by act of Congress. These were called the appointments of "the Midnight Judges," from the commissions of some of them having been made at nine o'clock on the evening of the 3d March, 1801, while, as it was then considered, his Presidency was to cease at midnight of that date. On the 4th March, before sunrise, he left the seat of Government, his feelings not suffering him to attend the inauguration of his Democratic successor! Private grief, also, for the recent death of a son, lay heavy on his heart,\* with his great political defeat.

\* Works, ix. 581.

## VI.

THE EX-PRESIDENT IN PRIVATE LIFE. FROM 4TH  
MARCH, 1801, TO 4TH JULY, 1826.

Crushed with shame, and filled alike with grief and indignation, Mr. Adams went home to his farm at Quincy, passing at once from the most intense activity of mind to the dull existence of a country gentleman in a little town. On the last year of office his letters came to him by thousands. The next, out of office, there were hardly a hundred. His franking privilege seemed to be all his visible record for five and twenty years of earnest public toil. He who so proudly

“Once trod the ways of glory,  
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honor,”

now finds all men desert him when the mantle of Presidential power fell off.

“Love ends with hope; the sinking Statesman’s door  
Lets in the crowd of worshippers no more.”

But dear old Massachusetts would not desert her son, faithful and yet dishonored. The Legislature sent him, for his past services, their thanks, in an address sincere, beautiful, and affectionate. It was a noble act of his native State, which he had done so much to illustrate and to protect. It touched the

sad old man's always thankful heart, and he found the final applauses of his State "more grateful than any which had preceded them." The farmers and mechanics of the town of Quincy honored his next birthday, cheering him with words of endearment, where words of consolation might not have availed.

The remaining twenty-five years of his life he devoted to farming, always his favorite employment; to political writing upon his own conduct, or upon the topics of the day; to literature, and to corresponding with his friends, who really prized him in power or in disgrace. With the exception of his letters, — historical, literary, and philosophic, — his writings at this period do him no honor. They are marked by partisan rage and by personal hatred. The world has forgotten them. Let us not call them from their appropriate tomb.

His wife died on the 28th of October, 1818. Fifty-four years and three days had they lived together, a blameless and beautiful wedlock, blessed with three sons and a daughter. He was eighty-three, and ever after wore a tinge of unaffected sadness. The sprightly humor vanished from his letters and his talk. How could he be cheerful when the Sun of his early being shone on him only from another Home, so near and yet so far and separate!

In 1820 Massachusetts found it needful to revise the Constitution which he had chiefly drafted in

1779. Eighty-five years old, his native town sent him a delegate to this Convention, as they had done to the other one, forty years before. He was chosen its President, — a fit honor, which the feeble old man as fittingly declined. What a change from the time when it seemed *radical* to demand that writs, title-deeds, and commissions should run in the name of the State; that is, of the People, and not in that of the King. In the Convention of 1820 Adams appeared a little more conservative than in that of 1779. The man at eighty-five is more timid than at five and forty. But in one thing he was more venturesome, younger, and more progressive than his fellows. He demanded *perfect religious freedom*, not only for Christians, but for non-Christians and anti-Christians. All men should be equal before the law. The State should not be Christian, but Human, as Jesus himself was. Puritanic bigotry was then too strong for the old man. The time came, and Massachusetts did what he had wished, thirty or forty years afterwards.

Able-bodied, able-minded, Mr. Adams gradually faded away. His hearing decayed, his eyes failed him, his hands were tremulous; but still the brave old soul held on, making the most of the wreck of life, now drifting alone to the Islands of the Blessed. Independence Day, the great day of his life, drew near. It was its fiftieth anniversary. The Nation

was to keep its solemn Jubilee, grateful alike to God and to His servants here below, for the blessings of the smiling and happy land. - A few days before the time, the town orator asked him for a "sentiment" to suit the approaching occasion. The old man, in his ninety-first year, infirm, feeble, and mortally sick in his bed, answered, "INDEPENDENCE FOREVER!" The day came, and found him living, but fast losing his hold upon earth. "Thomas Jefferson still survives," said the old man — his coadjutor and his rival, yet his friend. These were his last words. Soon after, while the land rang with cannons jubilant over his great deed, he passed onward, and ceased to be mortal. Jefferson had gone an hour or two before. How fortunate the occasion of his death! His son was then the President of this mighty Nation; and on its fiftieth birthday, calmly, quietly, he shook off the worn-out body, and, following his sentiment, went forth to "INDEPENDENCE FOREVER!"

II. Look next at his character, and consider its four elements — the Intellectual, Moral, Affectional, and Religious.

I. Mr. Adams had a great mind, quick, comprehensive, analytical, not easily satisfied save with ultimate causes, tenacious also of its treasures. His memory did not fail until he was old. With the exception of Dr. Franklin, I think of no American



politician in the eighteenth century that was his intellectual superior. For though Hamilton and Jefferson, nay, Jay and Madison and Marshall surpassed him in some high qualities, yet no one of them seems to have been quite his equal on the whole. He was eminent in all the three departments of the Intellect — the Understanding, the practical power; the Imagination, the poetic power, and the Reason, the philosophic power.

First. His understanding was ample. Though he was constitutionally averse to regular, severe, and long-continued attention, he yet easily mastered what lay before him, and reproduced it fluently when occasion required. He gathered a great amount of worldly knowledge, for he was a sharp observer of human affairs, if not a nice one. Yet he attended little to the world of matter, except for the economic purposes of Agriculture, or the enjoyment of its visible beauty. It is only when he is stimulated by the great mind of Franklin that he gives any attention to the investigations of Science.

At the age of forty he was the ablest lawyer in New England, perhaps the ablest lawyer in America. He was the most learned in historic legal lore, the most profound in the study of first principles. He went to the fountains of English Law, and did not disdain to follow the stream in all its crooked and self-contradictory course. He had a more complete collection

of law books than any man in New England, and so both puzzled and defeated the officers of the Crown with whom he contended. He was exceedingly well read, for that time and place, in the Roman Law, the Law of Nature, and the Law of Nations; and also well versed in Politics and in Morals. He had read much in the histories of Greece and Rome, and had some acquaintance with a few of their great writers, though never an accomplished classic scholar. He was quite familiar with the practical affairs of New England life.

His first opinion was often faulty, not seldom utterly wrong; but his final thought was commonly deep and just respecting the true nature of things. Hence, in spite of great defects, he was a man not only of instinctive sagacity, but also of sound judgment. In respect to this he has not received justice. All the great acts of his life,—the defence of Captain Preston, the denial that the British Parliament had any right by English law to rule these Colonies, the appointment of Washington as General, Commanding-in-Chief, the Declaration of Independence, the sending of a Commission to France in 1798,—all these things indicate the soundest of human judgment. But he lacked method in his intellectual processes. He had not the genius which is its own method, nor yet that sober, systematic habit of work, which, though seemingly slow, is, in the long run, so

swift and sure. He did things helter-skelter. In his administration as President he had no rule for anything.

Second. He had a good fair Imagination, above the average of educated men. Yet his Imagination was not equal to his Understanding. Besides, it had small opportunity for early culture, or even for accidental education in later life. He had more fondness for the beauty of Nature, and even of Art, than I find in his eminent political contemporaries. He was fond of music, of sculpture, and painting, and took delight in the grand works of European Architecture, which so astonish an American. His larger works — his controversial writings, his political papers — are plain to dire homeliness; but his letters to his few intimates, and especially to his wife, are charged with wild flowers of wit, humor, and fancy, which spread a cheering light on the grim landscape which expands all around.

Third. He had a great Reason, though its culture was greatly defective, and its method capricious and uncertain. He had not calmness enough to be a great philosopher, yet always looked for the actual causes of things, and studied carefully their modes of operation. This philosophic, metaphysical tendency appears in most of his deliberate writings, which always relate to political affairs. He is bold in his abstract speculation, always founding his work

on the ultimate principles of Nature. He is often profound in his remarks. Thus, in 1765, he speaks of "Rights derived from the great Legislator of the universe, — Rights that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws; they are antecedent to all earthly government."\* "Rulers are no more than attorneys, agents, and trustees for the people; the people have a right to revoke the authority that they themselves have delegated, and to constitute abler and better agents, attorneys, and trustees. The preservation of the means of knowledge among the lowest ranks is of more importance to the public than all the property of all the rich men in the country."†

The Declaration of Grievances, which he wrote in 1774, contains many profound thoughts, partly his own, partly the work of James Otis and Samuel Adams. His "Thoughts on Government"‡ is the finest specimen of his political writing. As it should be, his "PLAN" was borrowed from existing institutions; but it proves a careful observation of their effects, and a profound investigation of the causes of political welfare. His "Defence"§ of the American

\* Works, iii. 449.

† Works, iii. 457. On the Canon and Feudal Laws. A mere fragment, written by him at the age of twenty-nine, irregular and insufficient, but of great value at the time, 1765, not unprofitable now.

‡ Works, iv. 189.

§ Works, iv. and v.

Constitutions is less valuable, and contains many hasty generalizations, which experience has not confirmed, nor did history warrant them. He appeals from Human History to Human Nature; from the Actual of Establishment to the Ideal Right of Humanity.

Adams certainly had not a mind of the highest class. If he were the first American of that age after Franklin, he was second to him by a long interval, and several competitors stood nearly as high as he did. Unlike Franklin and Washington, he was not a man of well-balanced intellect or of self-controlled temper.

Thus constituted, he was an Inventor; but he was not a great Inventor. He was often in advance of his times, especially in his Plan of Government, his scheme of Universal Toleration, making a Christian Humanity to constitute all men as equals before the State. His Christian Commonwealth, like the Kingdom of Heaven, was to grant no privilege to Christians, but to secure justice to all Mankind.

He ran before the foremost of his time in seeing the Nation's necessity of a Navy and of a Military Academy. He required them in 1779, he founded them in 1799.

As an *Organizer*, he could deal with political ideas, constructing them into a Constitution. He could plan a Government with masterly skill. But



he had only the smallest talent for organizing *men*. He was always a lawyer, who could shape his principles into a measure. Here he had few equals; but he was never a practical politician, who could organize men about his idea, so that they should defend his measures and adopt his thoughts and conclusions. Thus many ran before him, and hence came the great failure of his political life. He could construct Institutions, but he could not govern men.

He was not a good Administrator, except in his own private affairs, where, perhaps, his wife was the presiding spirit. He had no system, but was governed by the enthusiasm of the moment.\* In the most important matter he went to work fluently, often with haste and without good heed. In diplomacy, at Paris, 1780, he ran violently down steep places, careless whom he ran over or what he ran against. In 1798 he took the lead in appointing Washington Commander-in-Chief of the army without consulting him beforehand,† and quarrelled with him about the appointment of officers.‡

He acted often from personal whim and caprice, and in a time of great political crisis, in 1799, left

\* Jefferson's Writings, ix. 186.

† Sparks's Washington, xi. 304. See, also, Washington's letter to McHenry, xi. 574. He never corresponded with Washington after April 5, 1798, xi. 198.

‡ Sparks's Washington, xi. 419, 420.



the seat of Government, and went home to Quincy to stay for many months.

Hence he was not a skilful diplomatist abroad. When Vice-President, Washington doubted if he was fit for a foreign mission.\* His administration as President was not peaceful or prosperous. He could not administer the Nation well, nor even manage his own party. Yet it must be confessed that he won a great diplomatic victory in Holland, and was called the "Washington of Negotiation," and, while President, successfully settled difficult questions with France and England. I give the rule and the exceptions.

II. Mr. Adams had great moral virtues, also great vices. Able-bodied, compact, and vigorous, though not always healthy, he had abundant physical courage. In scholarly men this is a great and a rare virtue. He says he meant to have been a soldier, and always had doubted whether he should have been a hero or a coward. He needed not to doubt. No drop of coward blood ran in his impetuous veins. He inherited "spunk," and transmitted it too.

He had moral courage in the heroic degree. He could not only face the bullets of a British man-of-War, but face the Royal Government of Massachusetts in 1765, all through the ante-revolutionary period. Nay, he could front the wrath of his own

\* Jefferson's Works, ix. 206.

friends and the whole town, and defend Captain Preston in 1770. He could face the indignation of the leaders of the Federal party in 1799. Let him be sure he was right, and he feared nothing but to be false to Right. When the Massachusetts Judges went under the golden chain of Britain in 1773, and the Government held it low to make them stoop the more lowly ; when the precedent-loving lawyers knew not what to do, Adams said, "Impeach the Judges ;" and the Court did no more business.\* Conscious of great integrity he did not hesitate to take great risks, and also to accept great responsibility.

He says he had four great trials in his life.

The first came from Captain Preston's case in 1770. The popular voice said, "Hang the authors of the Boston Massacre !" Adams's conscience said, "Defend them ; give them a free trial !" His friends said, "If you save them, you ruin yourself !" But Adams was John Adams, and he did his duty, saving the lives of the soldiers, and the virtuous reputation of Massachusetts.

On the 24th July, 1775, he wrote two private letters for Congress, which fell into the hands of the British, and were published. In one of these he recommends Disunion, Independence, concentration of the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial powers

\* Works, x. 237, et al.

of the whole Continent, a Navy, and seizure of the Tories. Hateful doctrines these to all but a minority of the Congress. Besides, he spoke of John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, then a chief political favorite, in terms of exquisite contempt. The doubtful members of Congress looked at him with wrath. Mr. Dickinson passed him without recognition in the street. He bore it patiently, and waited for his time.\*

In 1781, while minister to Holland, the Government delayed to acknowledge him as Minister. Others said, "Wait." He appealed to the Dutch people, who compelled their High Mightinesses to receive him, and so this bold and unprecedented diplomacy † turned out to be a great success.

In 1798, his Cabinet, the Federal party, and even Washington, said, "Send no Minister to France." Adams took the responsibility on himself; did not consult his hostile and treacherous Cabinet, but sent the Minister, and so broke the cloud of war which hung dark and fearful over the land and sea.‡ These four great trials—he came out of them all, clean and pure as he went in.

He was a conscientious man, and sought counsel of that still small voice, which tells the law of the mind, the Eternal Right, to whoso listens. He

\* Works, i. 178, 183.

† Works, i. 349, et al.

‡ Works, i. 536-543.

could not understand that the King's will was to govern the conscience of a subject.\* He had clear perception of justice, was veracious and outspoken, had an utter hatred of lies, of dissembling, and generally of hypocrisy in any form. He was *terribly* open, earnest, and direct, and could not keep his mouth shut. He knew this. Once he went with others to see the picture of Washington in Faneuil Hall. Some one remarked on the firm mouth, and said, "It looks as if he could keep it shut." "So he did," said Adams; but tapping with his cane his own bust, which the town of Boston had also placed in Faneuil Hall, he added, "that d—d fool never could." He hated all stratagems and tricks, and growled about the slow, noiseless way in which old, experienced Dr. Franklin threw out his lines, and drew in the treasures of the treacherous political deep. "Diplomacy is a silent art," and Adams was a talker. A man of deepest integrity, he could not dissemble, but wore his heart upon his sleeve. He had no reserve. His early rule was never to deceive the People, nor to conceal from them any truth essential to their welfare.† He observed this as a maxim all his life. He had great moral delicacy, and, being President, doubted if he ought to retain his son John Quincy Adams in the diplomatic office to which Washington had appointed him. To

\* Works, iii. 223.

† Works, ii. 214.

his letter, asking advice upon this, Washington replied, "It is right for you to *keep* him there, not to *put* him there." \* Yet Adams afterwards made his wife's nephew, William Cranch, Judge of the United States District Court at Washington, and his son-in-law, Colonel Smith, he put in a high office.† All our Presidents, except Washington and John Quincy Adams, have put their relations in office. It is a dangerous and unjust practice.

John Adams had a strong temptation to the indulgence of animal passions, but he kept all the appetites in their place; and in his old age could proudly write, "No virgin or matron ever had cause to blush at the sight of me, or to regret her acquaintance with me. No father, brother, son, or friend ever had cause of grief or resentment for any intercourse between me and any daughter, sister, mother, or any other relation of the female sex." ‡ Here he was greatly the superior of Franklin, Jefferson, Hamilton, nay, of Washington himself.

These are great virtues. Few politicians can boast such. But he was ill-tempered, "sudden and quick

\* Works, viii. 529. In this letter Washington expresses a *strong hope* that "you will not withhold merited promotion from Mr. John [Quincy] Adams because he is your son;" and also says, "I give it as my decided opinion that Mr. Adams is the most valuable public character we have abroad," and so on in the same strain.

† Works, ix. 63.

‡ Works, ii. 145.



in quarrel," and madly impetuous. He was not a good judge of character. He often suspected the noblest of men, and put credulous faith in mean and deceitful persons, and so was unjust while he meant it not. Intensely ambitious of place and of power, he yet sought always to rule his desire by his duty. But if he sought only excellent things, the *spirit* of the search was not in all cases commendable. The motive was often selfish, the method wrong, and the manner harsh. His temper was not magnanimous or noble. He was suspicious, and jealous, and envious of men before him in social rank, or above him in power. He attributes mean motives to all men, often to the noblest in the land. His early writings prove this abundantly, and his later also. He was envious of Dr. Franklin in France; and the frog stretched himself to resemble the ox. He hated a superior.

I think he rarely forgave a foe, or one he fancied such. Reverence he had for God; little for noblest men. Witness his harsh words about Samuel Adams and John Hancock; his unrelenting enmity to Hamilton and Pickering.

But his wrath against Dr. Franklin was of the most needless, wanton, and malignant character. I think he bore it with him to his grave. Sound-headed by nature as he was, he was constitutionally a fighting man. This appears in his Diary, and in the newspaper articles written by him before the



Revolution and after it. It also became manifest when he was Vice-President, and in the higher office of President, and it may be observed in the Autobiography which he wrote in his old age. His letters to Mr. Cunningham, in 1804–1809, seem to me not less than wicked. He was intensely violent in his wrath, which a trifle could rouse, and nothing could stay. He was indiscriminate as to the object of it. It might be a member of his Cabinet who opposed a measure, or a butcher in Quincy who brought in his bill. But shortly after the passion of his wrath he cooled down, and did with delight what he had at first refused with vehement anger.\*

Impatient of process, and greedy of result, he was most intensely desirous of honor and applause. His early Diary is full of examples ; so, too, is the later.

\* When he was President of the United States, Congress required him to negotiate a loan for the support of the American Army. The Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Wolcott, was decidedly of opinion that in the then condition of the money market he ought not to publish proposals for the loan offering to subscribers a less rate of interest than eight per cent. As to this state of things, he writes many years afterwards, in 1815, "My patience, which had been put to so many severe trials by enemies and friends, was quite exhausted, and I broke out, 'This d—d army will be the ruin of this country. If it must be so, it must. I cannot help it. Issue your proposals as you please.' I ask pardon for that peevish and vulgar expression ; but for the truth, in substance and essence, of this narration, I appeal to Mr. Wolcott himself. I know that Oliver Wolcott dare not lie." Works, x. 130.

At Paris, in 1782, he was highly complimented for the success of his negotiation in Holland. He writes in his journal, "A few of these compliments would kill Franklin, if they should come to his ears." \* He reads all the complimentary nothings which the French said to him. Yet, great as his vanity was, I think it never bent him aside from his duty. Loving the praise of man, he never once stooped for it; never hesitated to do the most unpopular act if sure it was right; never bowed that great, manly head to escape abuse which his imprudence or his temper brought upon him. He was excessively arrogant. "I always consider the whole Nation as my children," he writes in 1809; † "but they have almost all been undutiful to me. You two gentlemen," Mr. Wright and Mr. Lyman, "are almost the only ones, out of my own house, who have expressed a filial affection for John Adams."

He claims that he is the author of the chief things in the Declaration of Independence. "Jefferson has acquired such glory by his Declaration of Independence, in 1776, that, I think, I may boast of my declaration of independence in 1755, twenty-one years older than his." ‡ He refers to a letter of his written when he was a boy of twenty at Worcester. Some one ascribed to Samuel Adams "the honor of the first idea and project of Independence." John Adams claims that it was his thunder, let off when

\* Works, iii. 309.

† ix. 615.

‡ ix. 592.

he was twenty years old. "In 1755, when my letter to Dr. Webb was written, I had never seen the face of Samuel Adams.\* I heartily wished the two countries were separated forever."† "The Declaration of Independence of 4th of July, 1776, contained nothing but the Boston Declaration of 1772, and the Congressional Declaration of 1774. Such are the caprices of fortune! The Declaration of Rights [of 1774] was drawn by the little John Adams. The mighty Jefferson, by the Declaration of Independence of 4th July, 1776, carried away the glory of the great and the little."‡

Claiming so much for himself, he abused his rivals. Samuel Adams and John Hancock are the "Stone House faction, and will be sure of all the loaves and fishes in the National Government, and the State Government as they hope."§ He speaks sneeringly of Hancock. "Yes, this is the place where the great Governor Hancock was born. John Hancock! a man without head and without heart; the mere shadow of a man; and yet a Governor of old Massachusetts!"|| He did not like to hear the praises of Washington. One day he dined with a company in a neighboring town. After dinner, when he rose to

\* Works, ix. 592.

† Works, ix, 612.

‡ Works, vi. 278.

§ Works, viii. 508.

|| Cunningham Correspondence, p. 215. See his admirable account of Hancock, Works, x. 259.

depart, a clergyman attended him to the hall, and offered to wait upon him with his cloak, and said, "Sir, the country owes *so much* to Washington and you." Mr. Adams snapped him up. "Washington and me! Do not let me hear you say that again! Sir, Washington was a dolt." It was a momentary spasm of envy and of wrath, coming from "that weak humor that his mother," or some one else, "gave him." At other times he did justice to Washington, though always a little coldly, for neither liked the other. He was often unjust to Samuel Adams, and even to John Hancock, whose faults were certainly offensive, though his virtues were exceedingly great.

Constitutionally, Adams was a grumbler. He hated things present, and longed for the absent or the past. Thus, while a schoolmaster at Worcester, he often complains of his irksome task; but at Braintree, studying law, he sighs for the mental activity which school-keeping forced out of him. His life as a country lawyer, riding his circuit, pleases him no more. It is a life of "here and there and anywhere," and will lead him to neither fame, fortune, power, nor to the service of his friends, clients, or country.\* In 1765, in the Stamp Act times, the courts were shut. Adams writes in his journal, "Thirty years of my life are passed in preparation for business. I have had poverty to struggle with, envy and jealousy

\* Works, i. 84; ii. 208.

and malice of enemies to encounter; no friends, or but few, to assist me, so that I have groped in dark obscurity till of late, and had but just become known, and gained a small degree of reputation, when this execrable project (the Stamp Act) was set on foot for my ruin, as well as that of America in general, and of Great Britain." December 18, 1765.\* The very next day he finds that Boston has chosen him for her Attorney, to appear before the Council on this very matter of closing the Courts! What he thought was his ruin became the highway to fortune and to fame. By and by he complains of his public life, that he has done so much for the people. "I reap nothing but insult, ridicule, and contempt for it, even from many of the people themselves." "I have stood by the people much longer than they would stand by themselves. But I have learned wisdom by experience. I shall certainly become more retired and cautious. I shall certainly mind my own farm and my own office."† But here he complains he is out of politics. "I believe there is no man in so curious a situation as I am. I am, for what I can see, quite left alone in the world."‡

He travels for his health along the beautiful valley of the Connecticut River, but gets "weary of this idle, romantic jaunt." "I believe it would have been as well to have staid in my own country, and amused myself with my farm, and rode to Boston every day.

\* Works, i. 76.

† Works, ii. 260.

‡ Works, ii. 279.



I shall not certainly take such a ramble again merely for my health." "I want to see my wife, my children, my farm, my horse, oxen, cows, walls, fences, workmen, office, books, and clerks. I want to hear the news and politics of the day. But here I am at Bissell's, in Windsor, hearing my landlord read a chapter in the kitchen, and go to prayers with his family in the genuine tone of a Puritan." \* When in Congress he wants to resign. Ten days before the Declaration of Independence he writes, "When a few mighty matters are accomplished here, I retreat, like Cincinnatus, to my plough, and, like Sir William Temple, to my garden, and farewell politics! I am wearied to death. Some of you younger folks must take your trick, and let me go to sleep." (He is then about forty-one.) "My children will scarcely thank me for neglecting their education and interest so long. They will be worse off than ordinary beggars, because I shall teach them, as a first principle, not to beg. Pride and want, though they may be accompanied with liberty, or at least may live under a free Constitution, are not a very pleasant mixture nor a very desirable legacy, yet this is all that I shall leave them." † In the grand letter which tells of the Declaration of Independence itself, while his own magnificent defence of it is still echoing in his ears,

\* Works, ii. 272.

† Works, ix. 411.



and composing music at the end of his pen, he tells his wife he cannot accept the office of Chief Justice of Massachusetts. He has not "fortune enough to support my family, and what is of more importance, to support the dignity of that exalted station. It is too high and lifted up for me, who delight in nothing so much as retreat, solitude, silence, and obscurity." \* "In private life no one has a right to censure me for following my own inclinations in retirement, simplicity, and frugality. In public life every man has a right to remark as he pleases. At least he thinks so." "I had rather build stone walls on Penn's Hill (part of his farm), than be the first Prince in Europe, or the first General, or the first Senator in America." So he wrote on the 18th of August, 1776. † When Vice-President, he does not like the office; it is the most insignificant in the world. "I wish very heartily that a change of Vice-President could be made to-morrow. I have been too ill used in the office to be fond of it, if I had not been introduced into it in a manner that made it a disgrace. I will never serve in it again upon such terms." ‡ President Jefferson appointed John Quincy Adams Minister to Russia. The father was not pleased. "Aristides is banished because he is too just." "He will not leave an honester or abler man behind him. He was sent

\* Works, ix. 417.

† Hamilton's Hamilton, i. 164.

‡ Works, ix. 567.

away, as a dangerous rival too near the throne." \* Certainly these are great vices; but John Adams possessed such virtues that he can afford to have them told, and subtracted from his real merit. He was so perfectly open that it is himself who furnishes all the evidence against himself. If he exaggerates the faults of other men, he treats his own quite as seriously. He defended Hancock, whom he sometimes abused, and said, "If he had vanity and caprice, so had I. And if his vanity and caprice made me sometimes sputter, as you know they often did, mine, I well know, had often a similar effect upon him. *But these little flickerings of little passions determine nothing concerning essential characters.*" †

III. Adams was not very rich in his affectional nature; the objects of his love were few. Out of the family circle, I think he had no intimates or confidants. There were no friendships between him and the leading Patriots of the Revolution. His Diary represents him as a man "intensely solitary," who confided little in any one, and quarrelled often with many. He liked the Lees of Virginia; liked Ralph Izard, — a quite unworthy man; but made *friendships* with none of them, not even with Washington, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and other famous chiefs of the Revolution. But in the later years of

\* Works, x. 158.

† Works, x. 259.

his life a friendship quite beautiful sprang up with Jefferson, his old rival and former foe. The letters which passed between them are an honor to both of them, and form one of the pleasantest episodes in the later lives of these two great men. The rage of ambition is all over, and a tone of friendship enlivens the themes of the letters which occasionally passed between them, and in which both much delighted. His correspondence with Mr. Van der Kemp, a learned and scholarly Dutchman, whom the French Revolution drove to America, shows his affection in its most pleasing light. He was a charitable man, and did his alms in secret. While President, in a time of great distress, he subscribed five hundred dollars for the poor at Philadelphia; but he did it in private, and kept his name out of sight. He was lenient towards offenders. Thus, against the vehement advice of his Cabinet, he pardoned Mr. Fries, condemned for treason. The leading Federalists hated him for this act of righteous clemency.\* But he sometimes writes truculent letters about men who used what he called seditious language.† He was violent in his hasty speech, never cruel in his deliberate acts.

IV. Mr. Adams had strong religious emotions — reverence for God, conscientious desire to keep his

\* Works, ix. 57.

† Works, ix. 13, et. seq.; ix. 582-584.

natural Laws, a deep remorse when he violated the integrity of his own conscience, and a devout, unfailing trust in the goodness of God, which is alike the protection of Nations and of individual men. He, by his nature, inclined to the Ministerial profession; and but for the bigotry of that age, and for his own spontaneous enlightenment, would probably have been one of the most powerful in that class which has enrolled so much of the talent and virtue of New England, and made so profound a mark on the character of the people. All his life long Mr. Adams had a profound religious sense. Though hating formality, he was yet an ecclesiastical man as well as a religious man. But he hated Hypocrisy, hated Bigotry, hated Intolerance. Not a word of cant deforms his writings. In his early life he learned to hate Calvinism. That hatred continued all his days. He was an Arminian at twenty. He read Bolingbroke, Morgan, and other free-thinking writers, in his youth. Their influence is obvious. They helped to emancipate him from the thralldom of New England Theology. But they did not weaken his religious sense, nor impair his virtue. When an old man, he read the great French writers on religious matters, not without enlightenment and profit; but he did not show that audacious immorality which delighted to pull down, with mockery, the Sacred Instruction which they neither could nor would replace, nor

even attempt to supply. His theological opinions seem to have been much like those of Franklin, though in his case they do not seem to have had the same genial influence.

In framing the Constitution of Massachusetts, in 1779, he wished religion \* to be left free. All sects, Christian and non-Christian, were to be equal before the Law, and alike eligible to all offices. He could not carry that point. He labored for the same end in the Convention which revised the Constitution of Massachusetts in 1820; but still without success. In respect to religious toleration in 1779, he was far in advance of the Convention which sat forty years later, and indeed he was far in advance of the Courts of Massachusetts of this present day. He introduced a remarkable section into that Constitution for the encouragement of Literature, Science, and Morals.† He had a lively indignation against "that system of holy lies and pious frauds that has raged and triumphed for fifteen hundred years." He detested the cruelties practised in the name of religion. "Remember the Index Expurgatorius, the Inquisition, the stake, the axe, the halter, and the guillotine, and O, horrible, the rack!"‡ He writes to Jefferson, in 1817, "Twenty times in the course of my late reading, have I been on the point of breaking out,

\* Works, i. 627; iv. 221.

† Works, iv. 259; C. F. Adams's note.

‡ Works, vi. 479.



'This would be the best of all possible worlds if there were no religion in it!' But in this exclamation I should have been as fanatical as Bryant or Cleverly. Without religion, this world would be something not fit to be mentioned in polite company, — I mean Hell. So far from believing in the total and universal depravity of human nature, I believe there is no individual totally depraved. The most abandoned scoundrel that ever existed never yet wholly extinguished his conscience; and while conscience remains, there is some religion. Popes, Jesuits, Sorbonnists, and Inquisitors have some conscience and some religion. Fears and terrors appear to have produced a universal credulity. . . . But fears of pain and death here do not seem to have been so unconquerable as fears of what is to come hereafter." \* He sympathized with all sects in their desire for Piety and Morality, and thought Jefferson as "good a Christian as Priestley and Lindsey, who had called Jefferson an unbeliever." † "The human understanding is a Revelation from its Maker, which can never be disputed or doubted." "No prophecies, no miracles are necessary to prove this celestial communication." ‡ He scorns the doctrine of eternal damnation. "I believe no such things. My adoration of the Author of the Universe is too profound and too sincere. The love of God and of his creation — de-

\* Works, x. 254.

† Works, x. 56, 57.

‡ Works, x. 66.



light, joy, triumph, exultation in my own existence, — though but an atom, a *molécule organique*, in the universe, — these are my religion.”

“Howl, snarl, bite, ye Calvinistic, ye Athanasian divines, if you will. Ye will say I am no Christian. I say ye are no Christians, and there the account is balanced. Yet I believe all the honest men among you are Christians in my sense of the word.” \* He finds Christianity before Christ, Christian piety in the sacred writers before Jesus of Nazareth. He “does not believe in demoniacal possessions; even if the Evangelists believed it, he does not.” †

Of course the charge of Infidelity was brought against him, as against all thoughtful and outspoken men, who seek to understand the causes of things, and to trample fear beneath their feet.

I find his lack of religion in his bad temper, in envy, jealousy, hate, wrath; but not in his disbelief of malignant devils and eternal Hell. The proof of his real religion I find in his Veracity, his Justice, Philanthropy, and in that Integrity which, I think, never failed him.

Mr. Adams’s personal appearance was not imposing or dignified. He was less than the average height of New England men, though with much more than an average of weight and width. He was,

\* Works, x. 67.

† Works, x. 92.

in fact, a stout, corpulent man. His head was large, wide at the base, nearly round, but not high. His forehead was full and ample, though low for its width; the mouth well cut, the nose sufficiently massive. The general appearance of the face indicated power and repose, not that terrible vehemence of wrathful emotions with which it was sometimes animated. His bust and features seem to afford a good likeness of the man.

Mr. Adams wrote much, but he only wrote books designed to meet the need of the hour. His most important writings are: a Discourse on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765; the State papers in the quarrel between the Colony of Massachusetts and Governor Hutchinson; the Rights and Grievances of the American Colonies, 1774; his Plans of Government of the Independent States, 1776; the Constitution of Massachusetts, 1779; the Defence of the American Constitution, 1786, and the papers on Davila, written while he was Vice-President, and published in the Philadelphia newspapers. These were applications of his political principles to the actual affairs of America. In all these the style is poor, inelegant, and yet artificial. He is often inaccurate in his statement of facts, and sometimes hasty in his generalizations. His first address as President contains a sentence which I think was then the longest in what is known of the English language. It since

has been but once surpassed, and that by another citizen of Massachusetts who is yet more distinguished than Mr. Adams for literary culture.

His letters are the most pleasing part of his works, the only part now readable. Here the best are found in the beautiful correspondence with Jefferson, full of wit and wisdom, and, above all, enriched with a gentleness and affection that you vainly seek in so many other works of the great man. But the most charming of all his many writings are the letters to his wife. I think more than three hundred of them have been printed, and I know not where in the English language to find so delightful a collection. He had but one confidant, his wife; but one intimate friend, the mother of his children. To her he told all — his loves and his hates, his anger and his gratitude, his hopes and his fears. She was able to comprehend his great mind, to sympathize in all his excellence. Her judgment seems to have been as sound as his own. If not original like his, like Washington's it was cool, critical, and accurate. She poured oil on the troubled waters of his life, and called him to behold the heavenly bow of beauty and of hope in the cloud which brooded over them. The cloud dropped down, and the sunshine followed in the footsteps of the storm.

He was not what is now called an eloquent man. He had no oratorical tricks, no stops for applause,

no poetic images, nothing of what the editors and reporters and half-educated ministers name "fine writing," and what school-girls call "perfectly splendid." But everywhere strong sense, mastery of his matter, philosophic knowledge of causes, vehemence of emotion, and condensed richness of thought. The form is often faulty and misshapen, but the substance strong and sound. He moved other persons, for he was moved himself, and the great natural force which stirred him he brought to bear on other men. So he was always powerful as a speaker and writer. Yet, July 2, 1776, I think men did not say, "What a fine speech John Adams made!" but only, "Down with the Kingly Government." He abounded in *Ενεργεια*, which Demosthenes said was the first, second, and third requisite in oratory. Scarce any specimens of his speeches are left; only the fame of their power survives. You often find profound thought in his writings.\* No American writer upon Politics more abounds in it.

He had not much confidence in the people, no instinct of Democracy. He leaned to aristocratic forms of Government. So, in the Constitution of the State of Massachusetts, he would give the Gov-

\* Works, iv. 216. He argued that it was impossible for human wisdom to form a plan of government that should suit all future emergencies, and that, therefore, periodical revisions were requisite.

ernor an absolute negative to all Acts of the Legislature, and empower him to appoint all the officers of the Militia, the Generals, Colonels, Majors, Captains, and so on down to the Sergeants and Corporals.\*

He insisted on four things in his Plan of Government. (1.) A separation of the legislative, judicial, and executive Powers. (2.) The Legislature must have two bodies, a House and a Senate. (3.) The Judiciary must be appointed during good behavior. (4.) The Executive must be single; one man, not a council of men. It was a wise man who devised such a scheme in 1776. He was often accused of favoring Monarchy, and wishing to establish in America a King and a House of Lords. The charge is utterly false. I think Jefferson is not blameless for his representation of Adams's opinions. He foresaw the greatness of America, and in 1786 said, "We are now employed in making establishments which will affect the happiness of a hundred millions of inhabitants at a time, in a period not very distant." † He wrote a book on all the liberal Governments of the world, to show their virtues and their vices. He dared tell the faults of our own Institutions.‡ Who

\* Works, iv. 186, 231, 249, 250, 258. See his respect for birth, vi. 502. But see, in this connection, ix. 574; also, ix. 376, 551, 557, 571, 590.

† Works, iv. 587. Cunningham Correspondence.

‡ Works, iv. 276, 399; also x. 268. Cunningham Letters, lix. p. 195.



ventures on that now? Even then he was, for doing so, much abused.

In 1780 Dr. Franklin wrote from France home to his Government, that "Adams means well for his country, is always an honest man, often a wise one, sometimes, and in some things, is absolutely out of his senses;"\* and adds also, "I know that by telling it I hazard a mortal enmity." The criticism was just, and also the forecast of its consequence. But weigh the man in an even balance. His faults were chiefly of ill-temper and haste; his virtues — Patriotism, Truthfulness, Moral Courage, Integrity — have seldom been surpassed, nay, rarely equalled in public men. He had no prejudice against any section of the country. Here he was superior to both Jefferson and Washington, who ever denied justice to New England. He was an intense Patriot, and did not hesitate to sacrifice his dearest personal wishes for the good of his country. In his later days some distinguished foreigners came to visit him at Quincy. He met them by appointment, and sat in a great chair in the shade close by his house. "In the beginning of the fight did you think you should succeed?" asked one of the visitors. "Yes," said the old man; "I never doubted that the country would succeed, but I expected nothing but certain ruin for myself."

\* Diplomatic Corres. of Revolution, iv. 139.



The hate against him has not died away. Still, for old Federalist and for old Democratic families, detraction is busy at its work. But after all just deduction is made from his conduct, it must be confessed that no man has had so wide, so deep, and so lasting an influence on the great constructive work of framing the best Institutions of America. And the judgment of posterity will be, that he was a brave man, deep-sighted, conscientious, patriotic, and possessed of Integrity which nothing ever shook, but which stood firm as the granite of his Quincy Hills. While American Institutions continue, the People will honor *brave, honest old John Adams*, who never failed his country in her hour of need, and who, in his life of more than ninety years, though both passionate and ambitious, wronged no man nor any woman!



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NEW ENGLAND was settled by real Colonists; men full of ideas which were far in advance of their times. These ideas could not be carried out in England, and therefore they emigrated to what was afterwards called the "NEW ENGLAND." Here Democratic Institutions at once sprung up among them. Their antecedents and their principles could not have produced any different growth. The distinction between rich and poor, educated and ignorant, soon became the chief differences in their social scale. There was but one sort of men, though many conditions. The Government was by the people, and it favored the distribution of wealth, not its accumulation in special families. Education was open to all, at the public cost. The form of Religion was Congregational. The Congregational Church had more individual members than any Christian sect. The theology was Calvinistic, and that always stimulates men to metaphysical speculation and to liberal study.

In Virginia, it was quite different. Religion had nothing to do with its settlement. Partly, the emigrants were younger sons of younger brothers, descendants from wealthy houses, who either had some moderate property, or had got manorial grants of land from the Crown; partly, they were the servants and vassals of these nominal lords of Manors, and partly, they were the scourings of the British jails. They brought no superior Ideas along with them. They did not found democratic institutions; for all their care was to keep their institutions aristocratic. The Government was in the hands of a few, and it favored the entailment of property on a few, not its distribution among many. It kept up the division of Castes, so that there should be as many sorts of men as there were conditions of society. Social distinction was founded on the acknowledged differences in birth, property, and powerful connection, and to appearance not at all dependent upon knowledge, virtue, or true nobility of character. No pains were taken to provide for public education.

The Printing Press had come early to New England, where it had printed Eliot's translation of the Bible into the Indian language, and had published two editions of it long before Virginia had produced a printed line.

The form of Religion in Virginia was Episcopal. None other was tolerated. It encouraged neither



metaphysical thought nor biblical study. This tended to repress individuality of religion.

In New England wealth was diffused; education, political power, all were diffused widely. In 1764, James Otis said, "The Colonists are men; the Colonists are therefore free born; for, by the law of Nature, all men are free born, white or black. No good reason can be given for enslaving them of any color. Is it right to enslave a man because his color is black, or his hair short and curled like wool, instead of Christian hair? Can any logical inference or form of slavery be drawn from a flat nose, or a long or short face? The riches of the West Indies, or the luxury of the metropolis, should not have weight to swerve the balance of Truth and Justice. Liberty is the gift of God, and cannot be annihilated."

In a word, in Virginia everything was condensed upon a few, while in New England all was thoroughly Democratic. Still it might be seen, that in Virginia, while her Institutions were framed, and intended to be thoroughly Aristocratic, yet in spite of them the excellent men in that new country could not be kept down. They would rise, and by the natural high pressure of their qualities they would, like water, seek their natural level, because a downward tendency is impossible to Human Nature. And so, too, in New England, it happened that, although all her Institutions had been, from the beginning,

most eminently Liberal and Popular, yet many things there hindered the immediate and free development of the People.

In the beginning of the last century, in Virginia there were three classes of free white men.

First. The great proprietors, who owned large tracts of land. These were the "First Families" of Virginia, who, though dwelling in "abodes comparatively mean," affected to live in the style of British Nobles. They had rude wealth, land, cattle, fine horses, slaves, white servants, "bought for a time," and abundance of maize, wheat, and especially of tobacco — the great article of export.

Second. The small proprietors, men with moderate landed estates, cultivated under their own eye. Some of these became rich men, but never acquired that social rank to which the first were born. Yet the primal vigor of this population, its ready talent, and all its instinct of progress, lay in this second class, whence have arisen, I think, all the distinguished men of Virginia.

Third. Below these was the class of poor whites, indispensable to such a scheme of society. These were laborers, without landed property more than a patch of ground, and a little hovel, which added the deformity of a low Humanity to the original beauty of Nature. These men had no literary or scientific education, and could obtain none.

Underneath all were the negro slaves, who gave a peculiar character to the entire colony, affecting its industry, its thought, and its morals.

In the second class of small proprietors was born Peter Jefferson, on the 29th of February, 1708, at Osbornes, on James River, in Chesterfield County. The family had come from Wales. Peter seems to have inherited no property; the Jefferson family, I think, was poorer than the average of the class, just above the poor whites. Peter had no education in early life, but was able-minded as well as able-bodied, with a thoughtful turn. He became a surveyor of land, mainly self-taught, I fancy. He got a little property together, and in 1735 "patented" one thousand acres of land; that is, had it granted him by the Legislature of the Colony of Virginia. He bought four hundred acres more, the consideration paid being "Henry Weatherbourne's biggest bowl of arrack punch"! He made a little clearing in the primeval forest, and began his career as a planter. In 1738 he married Jane Randolph, she being in her twentieth, he in his thirtieth year. She was the daughter of Isham Randolph, a wealthy man, who lived in rough splendor and had great pretensions to family dignity, well educated for a man of that time; he was, moreover, intelligent and generous. Peter took his wife, delicately bred as she had been, to his rough farm, which he called Shadwell.

Here he planted his family tree, and subsequently became a prosperous man. He was appointed by the Legislature, in connection with Professor Fry, to make a map of Virginia. The work was done well for the time. He was commissioned Justice of the Peace, and appointed Colonel, and afterwards elected member of the House of Burgesses of the Colony of Virginia. He died August 17, 1757.

At Shadwell, on the 13th of April, 1743, his first son and third child was born, and christened THOMAS. His lineage was humble, as Virginians count genealogy; his destination was not humble, as Virginia's history may certify. After the great men I have before sketched, none has had so much influence on the destiny of America. Let us look this boy carefully in the face, and consider his deeds throughout all periods of his life, the character therein developed, and the extraordinary eminence he thereby acquired.

#### I. Look at his boyhood and youth. 1743 to 1764.

At the age of five he was sent to a common school at Tuckahoe, where the family moved when he was two years old. At nine years of age he studies under the Rev. Mr. Douglass, a Scotchman, a scholar, and an Episcopal Minister at Shadwell. With him the boy begins Latin, Greek, and French. He lived with the Minister, and found good instruction and mouldy pies. At fourteen he goes to Rev. Mr.

Maury's school, fourteen miles off, at Peter's Mountain. Mr. Maury, also a Scotchman, was a good scholar and a good teacher. In his spare time Thomas hunts on Peter's Mountain, and acquires an intimate knowledge of the animals and the plants, and some general knowledge of Natural History. These two gentlemen kept schools at their parsonages. When company came the schools broke up, and thus Thomas got less Latin and more hunting. The pay for his board and instruction was sixteen pounds a year at the one place, and twenty pounds at the other. He was a bright boy, courteous and quick.

In 1760, aged seventeen, he entered William and Mary's College, at Williamsburg, the capital of the Province, a town of fifteen hundred or two thousand inhabitants. Here he found another Scotchman, Professor Small, a good scholar, who still further helped and stimulated the intelligent youth. Jefferson was a friend of Dr. Small, and was devoted to study, often working fifteen hours a day. The Greek and Latin languages, and the mathematics, were his favorite pursuits. Metaphysics and ethics he greatly disliked. He did not incline to works of fiction, commonly so attractive to young minds. He was highly moral, it is said, but fond of horses, which fondness continued all his life. He was also inclined to music, and learned to play skilfully on the violin.



Thus he did not forget his sport in his toil. He staid at college but two years, and then, at nineteen, at the same place, began the study of Law with Mr. George Wythe, thought to be a profound lawyer at that time. He continued this preparation for his profession five years, often studying fourteen or fifteen hours a day. He had a natural fondness for profound investigation, yet he found Coke "a dull old scoundrel." He learned the Anglo-Saxon, the Italian, and the Spanish Languages, and, it seems, read many books very indirectly connected with his profession. Here he became intimate with Mr. Fauquier, the royal Governor of Virginia, a distinguished man, with quite elegant manners. Living familiarly in the best society of the Provincial capital, it was here and at this period that Jefferson acquired the easy carriage, gentlemanly deportment, and courteous manners which distinguished him all his life, and which greatly helped his success. Governor Fauquier was a gambler, and contaminated the Province with this vice. Jefferson kept clear from this detestable wickedness, shunning and hating it all his life. Fauquier was also a Freethinker in religion, and the effect was visible on the young man.

He fell in love at this early period, like other young men, and, like them, wrote silly letters, such as are still penned. Indeed, all his letters of this period are rather frivolous. He talks about "Becca"



and "Sukey," "Judy" and "Belinda," finding those names more attractive than that "dull old scoundrel," Lord Coke. "How did Nancy look at you when you danced with her at Southall's?"

"Handsome in his old age, in his youth Jefferson was no beauty. Then he was tall, thin, and raw-boned; had red hair, a freckled face, and pointed features;" but his face was intelligent and kindly, he talked with ease and grace, and in spite of exterior disadvantages, was a favorite with all the young women.\*

At the age of twenty-four, 1767, he was admitted to practice at the bar. Thus far his life had been an easy one, and singularly prosperous. How different from the youth of Franklin, or of Washington, or of Adams! He kept himself free from the common vices of Virginia young men, such as gaming, drunkenness, debauchery; he never swore or used tobacco. His letters begin in his twentieth year, and, though somewhat frivolous, are written in a natural style at once easy and elegant. Here was a dawn to promise the great man.

II. 1764-1768. A Lawyer and Politician, engaged in the affairs of Virginia and of the Nation, Jefferson had his office at Williamsburg, the capital of that Colony. It seems he "had little taste for the techni-

\* Tucker, i. 23.

calities and chicanery of that profession," and never thought very highly of lawyers as a class. "Their business is to talk," said he. For the seven or eight years he followed this profession he gradually rose to some eminence. His style was clear, but his voice poor and feeble, and, after speaking a few moments, it "would sink in his throat." He was not meant for a speaker. Yet, it appears, he had a considerable business for a young man. I find him employed in about five hundred causes previous to the year 1771, and in about four hundred and fifty causes in the next three and a half years, when he finally gave up business. His total fees of 1771 were about two thousand dollars for the year; and that, probably, shows the average of his professional receipts.

In 1772, January 1, in the twenty-ninth year of his age, Mr. Jefferson married Mrs. Martha Skelton, the childless widow of Bathurst Skelton, and the daughter of John Wayles. She is said to have been handsome and accomplished, and she certainly was rich. Jefferson then owned one thousand nine hundred acres of land and forty or fifty slaves, bringing him an income of two thousand dollars a year. Mr. Skelton's widow brought him forty thousand acres of land and one hundred and thirty-five slaves, which she had inherited from her father.

Such was the marriage portion of the great Dem-

ocrat.\* The marriage was happy, and both parties seem to have been greatly fond of each other. Many tender little passages occur in his life showing how deep was their mutual affection. There is no more talk about "Becca" and "Sukey" in the letters.

In 1769, three years before his marriage, at about the age of twenty-six, he had been chosen member of the House of Burgesses for Albemarle County. He was on the side of America, and against the oppressive measures of George III. Still more, in favor of Liberty, he urged the Legislature to allow individuals to emancipate their slaves. No; it could not be granted. Not until 1782 could he persuade that body to allow manumission in Virginia.† In 1774 the Governor dissolved the House. Some of the most patriotic men met in a tavern to consider the matter. Thomas Jefferson was one of them.

In May, 1774, there was a People's Convention in Virginia, the first ever held there without express form of law. This Convention was to choose delegates to the Continental Congress, which had been called to meet at Philadelphia, in September. Jefferson did not attend the Convention, being prevented by illness; but he drew up a form of instructions for the delegates to Congress, that it might be offered to the Convention, and adopted therein. This was a

\* Randall, i. 63-65.

† Tucker, i. 43; also Randall, i. 58.

very remarkable paper, and revolutionary enough for New England. His draft was not adopted; but it was read, and afterwards printed as "A Summary View of the Rights of British America." The leap was too long, as yet, for the mass of the citizens. The "instructions" declared that the king "has no right to land a single armed man on our shores." "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time." \*

On May 17, 1775, he was chosen member of Congress, to supply the place of Peyton Randolph. He took his seat, June 21, 1775, rather an obscure man then, with only a Virginia reputation. He had no national fame save what the "Summary View" of 1774 had given him. He was a silent member, but John Adams calls him "powerful, frank, explicit, and decisive."

His most important services in Congress were, (1) his draft of an address on the "Causes of taking up arms against England;" † (2) the answer which he wrote to Lord North's "Conciliatory proposition;" and (3) his report of the far-famed "DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE," to me the most remarkable and important State paper in the world. Some of his descendants in Boston, I am told, still keep the little

\* Tucker, i. 60, 61.

† This address was not adopted, but shared the fate of his draft of "instructions" in the Virginia Convention.

desk he wrote it upon. I hope the spirit of Democracy, which is freedom to all men, still animates and inspires all who write or look thereon.

In 1776, September 1, Jefferson returned from Congress, and devoted himself to reconstructing the Constitution of his native State. He drafted a sketch or outline of a Constitution, which was not accepted, and is now lost; but he wrote the preamble to the Constitution, which was adopted. This came from the same inspiration which had animated the Declaration of Independence. He took his seat in the Virginia House of Delegates, October 7, 1776, and there began the other great work of his life, the thorough Reformation of the State Institutions.

1. He proposed to abolish all entails of landed estates. The actual possessors of entailed estates might dispose of them like other property. This was a Revolution. Jefferson laid the democratic axe at the root of that evil tree which poisoned the people. You may guess at the opposition to the measure, and the wrath against its author. But it prevailed. Males and the first-born were to have no special privilege. Primogeniture was done away with. All the children might share alike in the inheritance of their father's land and goods.

2. He advised that foreigners should be allowed to become naturalized, and to attain all the rights of citizens.



3. He recommended the revision of the laws in three important matters.

The penal laws must be mitigated. The penalty of death ought to be limited to murder and treason. There should be no imprisonment for honest debt.

There must be complete religious freedom. No one should be forced to pay for opinions which he disliked, or for the support of any form of religion against his will. The church must rest on the voluntary contributions of the people. The law may judge no man's opinions. The Commonwealth of Virginia, like the Kingdom of Heaven, is to show no special favor to Christians, but Jews, Mohammedans, Deists, and Atheists are all to be equal before the law, and alike eligible to all offices. The church Establishment should be abolished, and all religious sects put on an equal footing.

He would provide for the public education of the people, promote the culture of the great mass of men in free common schools, and improve the colleges for the superior education of the few.

Some of these things he accomplished at once. Others were so far in advance of the times, that years must elapse before his ideas could be realized. He wished to abolish Slavery, but he had tried in vain to procure an act to enable a master



to emancipate his slaves. So in the revision of the laws he made no new attempt.

In these great works other men labored with Jefferson, but his was the leading mind, and shot before all others in the Slaveholding States.

Next he was chosen Governor of Virginia, June 1, 1779. He was reëlected the following year. Here he had a difficult work to perform. Virginia contained about two hundred and ninety thousand free whites, and two hundred and seventy thousand slaves. They were scattered over sixty-one thousand square miles. The militia included all the free white men between sixteen and sixty; but so scattered was the population, that, in most of the settled parts of the State there was not one militia-man to a square mile. And so ill-armed were the people, that there was not more than one gun that could fire a bullet, to five militia-men. Not a gun to five square miles of land! In an average tract of ten miles square, containing a hundred square miles, there would not be twenty guns. When recruits were drafted into the militia, many came without hats or caps, and were, moreover, barefoot! Besides all that, the State of Virginia had no shipping. There were two hundred and seventy thousand men, black enemies in the midst of the people, ready to side with an invader when he should appear. The coast of Virginia is intersected with

bays and navigable rivers. In 1781 the British attacked the State with a numerous fleet and well-appointed armies; what defence could be made? With the most able Governor she could not have done much. But Jefferson had little administrative skill, and not the least military talent or disposition. The British did what they would in his State, — burnt the houses, pillaged the people, and in a few months did damage to the amount of ten million hard dollars. Thirty thousand slaves were carried off. The British did not arm them and set them against their masters, else the State had been lost beyond recovery. Jefferson's own estates were plundered. He barely escaped being taken prisoner, for the militia made scarce any defence. Only two hundred men could be found to defend Richmond, one of the largest towns in the State.

Jefferson resigned his office, declining a reëlection in 1781. He found he was unfit for the station, and left it for braver and more military men. An attempt was made to impeach him, but it failed; and, instead of impeaching him, the Legislature subsequently passed a vote of thanks to him.

In 1781 I find him a member of the House of Delegates, working nobly for the great enterprises that have been previously mentioned. He went back to Congress in 1783, and there he, the author of the Declaration of Independence, helped to ratify

the treaty of peace. In 1780, June 1, the Delegates of Virginia ceded the portion claimed by her of the North-west Territory to the United States. Congress in 1784 passed the famous "Ordinance of the North-west Territory." Jefferson drafted the bill, and provided that the governments to be constituted therein "shall be in republican forms, and shall admit no person to be a citizen who holds any hereditary title;" "that after the year 1800 of the Christian era, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in any of the said States, otherwise than in punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted to have been personally guilty."\* A motion was made on the 19th

\* Randall, i. 398. In April, 1784, Mr. Jefferson was Chairman of a Committee (Mr. Chase of Maryland and Howell of Rhode Island also were members), and in that capacity submitted a plan for the government of the entire western region, from the thirty-first degree of north latitude to the northern boundary of the United States (thus including much more than the territory north-west of the Ohio River). One of the provisions of this important bill was, "that after the year 1800 there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in any of the said States" into which it was provided that the territory might be divided, "other than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." The question being taken upon this proviso, six States voted for it, and but three against; one State was equally divided in its representation, and three were absent. And so it was lost, as by the rules at least two thirds of the thirteen States were required to vote for it before it could become a law.

April, 1784, and afterwards carried, to strike out this clause. The New England members gave a unanimous vote to retain that clause which would have established slavery in what is now Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

Mr. Jefferson was the recognized leader of Congress in 1783-4, though he had able men for rivals. On the 10th of March, 1785, Congress appointed him Minister to France, to succeed Dr. Franklin. Indeed, he had three times before been offered the same office, and had declined it, sometimes in consequence of the feeble health of his wife: now she had become loosed from her frail body.

### III. As Diplomatist in Europe. 1785-1789.

I shall not discourse at any length on his services abroad. He was a skilful diplomatist. His great knowledge, his admirable sagacity, his conciliatory spirit, and his good manners, helped to accomplish what he sought. He attended to the usual routine of a Minister's duties, but no great services were to be accomplished. He returned to his country, on leave of absence, in 1789. A singular reception awaited him at home. When he came to Monticello his slaves took him from his coach, and bore him in their arms to the house.\* A singular mode of riding for the author of the Declaration of Inde-

\* Tucker, i. 337.

pendence! But it proved that if a master, he was kind and beloved! Jefferson was pleased with a diplomatic position, but President Washington had destined him to higher services.

#### IV. In the Executive of the United States. 1790–1809.

When Jefferson returned from France the Constitution was adopted, the new officers chosen, the Government organized. At first he did not like the Constitution. It made the Central Government too strong, excessively curtailing the power of the individual States. It would allow the same man to be chosen President again and again, to the end of his life. It contained no Bill of Rights, declaring what powers the States and the individual citizens did not delegate to the General Government. Jefferson was a Democrat, and the Constitution was not the work of Democrats; in fact Franklin and Madison were the only men of considerable ability who represented the Democracy in forming the Constitution. But after it was adopted he came earnestly to its defence, and held three several Executive offices under it.

1. He was Secretary of State from March 21, 1790, to December 31, 1793.

He did not wish to accept the office, preferring his Diplomatic Mission at Paris. But Washington so-



licited him to accept, and he entered on the duties of the Secretaryship. Hamilton was Secretary of Treasury, Knox of War — both Federalists, whom Jefferson accuses of leaning towards Monarchy. Edmund Randolph was Attorney General, and Jefferson Secretary of State — both Democrats. Jefferson and Hamilton were commonly on opposite sides. They contended on measures and on principles, then quarrelled, and finally hated one another with all their might.

Jefferson opposed the great measures of Washington's Administration; the Funding Bill, the Assumption of State Debts, and the establishment of the United States Bank. Here, I think, he was right; but the measures prevailed, and were popular with the wealthy and educated classes in all the Northern States. But he opposed the Military Academy, the Coast Fortification, and the Navy. He especially disliked the Navy, and opposed the measures of the President to raise it to any footing efficient for War. He took sides with France, and favored her encroachments. He was willing to allow Mr. Genet, the Minister of France, to violate the neutrality of our soil, to enlist soldiers in our towns, and to fit out and commission privateers in our harbors. He disliked England, and, in fact, had a distrust and fear of that Nation, which were only too well founded. Thus he inclined to a war with Eng-



land, and resolutely resisted some of her pretensions with manly spirit. He supported men who abused Washington and the Government, of which Jefferson himself was a part.

Washington became more and more anti-democratic in his administration, put more and more confidence in Hamilton, whose active mind, invasive will, and skill in organizing men had an undue influence over the President, then waxing feeble, and becoming averse to business. Jefferson found his power diminishing in the Cabinet, and not growing in the country. At the end of 1793 he withdrew from his post, and sat down on his estate at Monticello to repair his private fortunes, already somewhat shattered.\*

Out of office he was the head of the Democratic party even more than while in it, and the centre of the opposition to Washington and his administration. His house was the headquarters of the opposition. His letters show that his heart was not at Monticello, nor his mind busy with maize, tobacco, and breeding slaves. He professed to desire no office. He would live in private, and arrange his plantations and his books.

But when Washington was about to withdraw from office, in 1796, Jefferson was the Democratic candidate for the Presidency. He was defeated.

\* Tucker, i. 466-470.

John Adams had seventy-one votes. — one more than a majority; Jefferson, sixty-eight, — two less than enough. John Adams represented the Constitutional Party, which included the wealth, the education, the farming and the mercantile interests, and the inventive skill of the Nation. Jefferson was the champion of the Progressive Party, which was composed of a few men of genius, of ideas, and strength, but chiefly made up of the lower masses of men, with whom the instincts are stronger than reflection, and the rich slaveholders of the South, who liked not the constraints of law.

2. While Jefferson was Vice-President, his only function was to preside in the Senate, where the Federalists had a decided majority. President Adams disliked him, shunned him, did not consult him about public affairs. Indeed, the political difference between them was immense. Their systems were antagonistic. Jefferson looked with the eyes of a partisan on some of the measures of Adams's administration, and with righteous contempt on the "Alien and Sedition" Law, and other despotic measures. But in these he must have read the prophecy that his opponents would soon fall, to rise never more. He contended vehemently against the party in power.

In 1798 he said, "Our General Government, in nine or ten years, has become more arbitrary than

even that of England, and has swallowed up more of the public liberty.”\* He drew up the celebrated Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, which declared several Acts of Congress “null and void;” “not law, but altogether void, and of no force;” and called on the other States, within their bounds, to nullify them, and all such unconstitutional acts. Such resolutions looked revolutionary. Alas, they were only too just! But Kentucky was not quite ready for such strong measures, and modified the resolutions. Presently Madison presented the same doctrine in the Virginia Resolutions of 1798. Both papers came from the Democratic spirit of Jefferson, and the seeming dangers were yet unavoidable. For the acts they opposed were about as unjust as the Fugitive Slave Bill of 1850. Jefferson feared centralized power, which always degenerates into despotism. He loved local self-government, and did not apprehend that it would run to license, as it yet often has done, and now does in South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. He was afraid only of the concentrated despotism of the few, not knowing that the many may also become tyrants.

He watched with a keen eye the increasing troubles of the Federal party, the hostility of its leaders to the President, for whose office he was the chief candidate of the Democracy. He grew more and

\* Tucker, ii. 43.

more bold, and confident of success. Indeed, the ultimate victory of his partisans was never doubtful. They embodied the Nation's instinct of progress, though in no high moral form.

The Federal party deserted the ablest and the most honest of their great men. John Adams was defeated. Jefferson and Burr had the same number of Electoral votes. It came to the House of Representatives to decide who should be President. They voted by States. The Democracy voted for Jefferson, the Federalists preferred Aaron Burr. Thirty-five times they balloted without choice. On the 17th of February (1801),—on the seventh day of the ballot, and at the thirty-sixth trial,—Jefferson was chosen. Burr was Vice-President, and the Federal party dead. Rich in great men, who did noble service in their day, it had done its work, and it died when it was needed no longer. Let you and me do justice to its great merits and to its great men, but never share in its distrust of the People and of the dearest instincts of Humanity.

3. Jefferson became President on the 4th of March, 1801, and held the office eight years.

It was a fortunate time for the chief of the Democratic party to enter upon his power. The Federalists had taken the responsibility of organizing the Government, providing for the payment of debts, levying taxes, making treaties of alliance and com-

merce with foreign states. The Democracy had only to criticise the faults of their rivals; they were not obliged to share the blame of what was unpopular. Besides, the storm of war which had threatened between the United States and either England or France, had been blown off by the powerful breath of Adams. The Nation was at peace, the revenue abundant, industry more various and successful than ever before. Jefferson was the most popular man in his party; perhaps, also, himself the ablest. Certainly no Democrat was endowed with such versatile skill. There was no longer any hope of reconciling the two parties as such, or of reconciling the Federal leaders. John Adams had gone down. Washington himself could not have breasted the flood of waters for a week longer; the great swollen sea of the Democracy would have overwhelmed him, and, with its irresistible surge, would have borne some more fortunate rival far up the strand.

The Federal party was swallowed up. Jefferson's policy was not to array the hostile parties, but, breaking up all parties, to gather to himself the mass of the people. His Inaugural Address, very handsomely written, was a proclamation of peace. "We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists," said he. Nothing could be more timely.

He selected a good Cabinet. The Mates were all Democrats. He was Master, not to be overcome



by his councillors, as Adams, and even as Washington, had often been. He did not change them in eight years: they were a unit. He removed the Federal leaders from all the most important offices. How else could he get rid of them? "Few die," said he, "and none resign." But he intended not more than twenty removals in all. Of course those who went out looked grim at those who came in, lean with expectation. Jefferson *would* have rotation in office.

Here are the six chief acts of his administration.

1. He abandoned the defences of the country. Upon the ground of expediency, he opposed the fortification of the principal harbors, and he considered the establishment of a Military Academy not within the specific powers assigned to Congress. While he was Vice-President, he and his Republican party had vehemently opposed a Navy, as being altogether unsuited to the means of the United States, and as being likely to involve the country in war. In this he opposed and obstructed the policy very much favored by Mr. Adams. And, consistently with these principles, when he himself came into power, he neglected the Army and Navy, and insisted upon building two hundred and fifty gunboats, which should cost but five thousand dollars each, instead of constructing larger and more efficient ves.



sels, which would require the permanent employment of naval officers and seamen. It was Mr. Jefferson's plan, that in time of peace these gunboats should be hauled up under sheds, erected for the purpose on the sea-shore; and that in war time they should be fitted for service, and manned with a maritime militia, enlisted temporarily for the purpose. This scheme was violently attacked, and in fact it proved a failure. Mr. Jefferson employed Thomas Paine to write in defence of it. He certainly wrote very ingeniously, but, in spite of his logic, the public and the men of experience remained incredulous, and "when, soon afterwards, many of the gunboats were driven ashore in a tempest, or were otherwise destroyed, no one seemed to regard their loss as a misfortune, nor has any attempt been since made to replace them." In these things he made great mistakes, partly because he limited his views from ill-conceived motives of economy, and partly because of a wise fear of laying the foundations of great and permanent military and naval establishments. And thus it was that he left his country's commerce and seamen defenceless on the ocean.

2. He promoted the repeal of the Judiciary Act.

This swept off forever Mr. Adams's "Midnight Judges,"\* and established an admirable precedent,

\* Jefferson had always looked upon this act of Mr. Adams as personally unkind to himself. See his letter from Washington, June 13, 1804, to Mrs. Adams. Randall, iii. 105.

which will have its due weight at some future day.

From his earliest days of public life he had always known that judges were but men, and that they were affected with weakness and infirmity, with prejudice and party spirit, like as other men are.\* In 1778 he had attempted to provide, that in the Chancery Court of Virginia, all matters of fact should be tried by a jury, in the same manner as in the courts of law. But here he was defeated by an adroit amendment proposed by Mr. Pendleton.† It was one of his objections to the Constitution of the United States, that the decisions of the judges of

\* Works, vii. 178. Our judges are as honest as other men are, and not more so. . . . Their maxim is, *Boni judicis ampliare jurisdictionem*.

Works, iii. 81. To the Abbe Arnoud, Paris, July 19, 1789. "We all know that permanent judges acquire an *esprit de corps*; that being known, they are liable to be tempted by bribery; that they are misled by favor, by relationship, by a spirit of party, by a devotion to legislative or executive power; that it is better to leave a cause to the decision of cross and pile than to that of a judge biassed to one side; and that the decision of twelve honest men gives still a better hope of right than cross and pile does. It is in the power, therefore, of the juries, if they think permanent judges are under any bias whatever, in any cause, to take on themselves to judge the law as well as the fact. They never exercise this power, but when they suspect partiality in the judges; and by the exercise of this power they have been the firmest bulwarks of English liberty. Were I called upon to decide whether the people had best be omitted in the legislative or judiciary departments, I would say it is better to leave them out of the legislative."

† Works, i. 37.

the National Courts were not subject to the same qualified negative of the Executive power as are all the acts of Congress.\* In his Autobiography he writes, "Nothing could be more salutary there [in England] than a change to the tenure [of the judges] of good behavior, and the question of good behavior left to the vote of a simple majority in the two Houses of Parliament." † In his first annual message, as President, to Congress, he says that the papers he lays before them will enable them "to judge of the proportion which the institution [United States Supreme Court] bears to the business it has to perform." ‡ In a letter to Mr. Kerchival § he objects to the independence of the Judiciary, and affirms that they ought to have been elected. "The judges of Connecticut," says he, "have been chosen by the people for nearly two centuries, and I believe that there has never hardly been an instance of change." He proceeds, and remarks that "if prejudice is still to prevail . . . against the vital principle of periodical election of judges by the people, . . . let us retain the power of removal on the concurrence of the executive and legislative branches, and nomination by the Executive alone. Nomination to office is an Executive function. To leave it to the legislature, as we do, is a violation of

\* Works, ii. 329.

† Works, viii. 13.

† Works, i. 81.

§ Works, vii. 12.

the principle of the separation of powers." Also, in 1799, he writes,\* "The judiciary is alone and single-handed in its assaults upon the Constitution, but its assaults are more sure and deadly, as from an agent seemingly passive and unassuming;" and to Judge Johnson,† "This practice [of the Supreme Court of the United States] of travelling out of the case to prescribe what the law would be in a moot case not before the court, is very irregular and very censurable. . . . In the Marbury Case, the Chief Justice went on to lay down what the law would have been had the court jurisdiction of the case. . . . The object was clearly to instruct any other court, having the jurisdiction, what they should do if Marbury should apply to them." And to Mr. Barry,‡ in 1822, he writes, "We already see the power installed for life, responsible to no authority (for impeachment is not even a scarecrow), advancing with a noiseless and steady pace to the great object of consolidation." To Edward Livingston, in 1825,§ "One single object, if your provision attains it, will entitle you to the endless gratitude of society, — that of restraining judges from usurping legislation. With no body of men is this restraint more wanting than with the judges of what is called our General Government, but what I call our Foreign department.

\* Tucker, ii. 436.

† Works, vii. 256.

† Works, vii. 295.

§ Works, vii. 403.

They are practising on the Constitution by inferences. . . . This member of the government was at first considered the most harmless and helpless of all its organs. But it has proved that the power of declaring what the law is, *ad libitum*, by sapping and mining, slowly and without alarm, the foundations of the Constitution, can do what open force would not dare to attempt." There are many other better known and more frequently quoted passages to the same purpose.\* And to show that Mr. Jefferson's fear of the despotism of the Judiciary was by no means unfounded, read a letter from a distinguished Federalist, Oliver Wolcott (then Secretary of the United States Treasury), to his friend Fisher Ames, which bears date 29th of December, 1799: "There is no way [for the General Government] to combat the State opposition but by an efficient and extended organization of judges, magistrates, and other civil officers." Thus it seems that Mr. Jefferson was, during his whole political life, well aware of those tendencies which would make the Judiciary, to use his own language, "a despotic branch."

3. He caused to be abolished all the internal and direct taxes which had, before his Administration,

\* For these and other passages, see Tucker, ii. 112. Works, iv. 561; v. 549; vi. 462; vii. 134, 178, 192, 199, 216, 278, 322, 403. Randall, iii. 124, 636.



been levied by the Government of the United States. They consisted of taxes, or excise, on stills, domestic spirits, refined sugars, licenses to keep shops, sales at auction, and on carriages, stamped vellum, parchment, &c. They were abolished after the first day of June, 1802. Meantime, and during their collection, they had excited such opinions and feelings as were expressed in Mr. Jefferson's letter to Mr. Madison, dated December 28, 1794: "The excise law is an infernal one. The first error was to admit it by the Constitution; the second, to act on that admission; the third, and last, will be to make it the instrument of dismembering the Union, and setting us all afloat to choose what part of it we will adhere to. . . . The detestation of the excise law is universal, and has now associated to it a detestation of the Government, and [the information] that a separation which, perhaps, was a very distant and problematical event, is now near and certain, and determined in the mind of every man." These taxes had afterwards caused the famous Whiskey Insurrection in Pennsylvania in 1794, which at that time seemed as seriously to threaten the stability of our Union as any political disturbances that have since taken place. The entire amount which these excise and direct taxes brought into the treasury of the United States was but six hundred thousand dollars per annum; that is to say, the gross revenue was one million of



dollars, and the cost of its collection was four hundred thousand dollars. As Mr. Jefferson said, "By suppressing at once the whole internal taxes, we abolish three fourths of the offices now existing and spread over the land." It was certainly a wise measure of administration and pacification.

4. He pardoned all persons in jail for offences against the Alien and Sedition Laws, and discontinued all process against men who were waiting trial on charges of breaking those laws. He was clearly of opinion that these wicked laws were unconstitutional, and he went forward promptly and boldly to remedy the injustice which they had so uselessly occasioned.

5. He secured the acquisition of the territory of Louisiana by negotiation and purchase.

This was a success of the greatest importance to the security and to the prosperity of this country. And by no one could it have been attained with more foresight and skill, or by more wise use of fortunate opportunities, than were exhibited by Mr. Jefferson before and during the events of the negotiation.

April 18, 1802, President Jefferson writes to Robert R. Livingston, "The cession of Louisiana and the Floridas by Spain to France works most sorely on the United States. . . . It reverses our political relations, and will form a new epoch in our political

course. . . . We have ever looked to her [France] as our natural friend. . . . There is on the globe one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. It is New Orleans, through which the produce of three eighths of our territory must pass. . . . France, placing herself in that door, at once assumes to us the attitude of defiance. Spain might have retained it quietly for years. Her pacific dispositions, her feeble state, would induce her to increase our facilities there. . . . Not so can it ever be in the hands of France. The impetuosity of her temper, the energy and restlessness of her character, . . . render it impossible that France and the United States can continue long friends when they meet in so irritable a position. The day that France takes possession of New Orleans, . . . from that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation. We must turn all our attention to a maritime force, for which our resources place us on very high ground."

Such was his statement of the position of affairs at the time when he so wisely initiated the measures which were to secure the vast territories of the West to the United States. On his part everything was ready and prepared to receive the gift of what was then for the most part a wilderness, but which he knew would soon become of inestimable importance to the peace and welfare of his country. Very quick-

ly, sooner than he could have hoped or dreamed, the situation changed. First Consul Bonaparte suddenly decided to break the Peace of Amiens with England. As a preparation for so doing, and to raise means for his immense projects, it became necessary for him to make sale of Louisiana to the party who would pay him the most for it; for he well knew that such property as France had in Louisiana would not be worth two months' purchase after his war should be declared. Therefore it was that, in the early summer of 1803 (the treaty having been concluded 30th of April of that year), President Jefferson was able to accept the congratulations of his friends on the acquisition of Louisiana. "The territory acquired," says he, "as it includes all the waters of the Missouri and Mississippi, has more than doubled the area of the United States."

In this connection Mr. Jefferson has been much blamed for the addition of Louisiana to the territories of the United States without any constitutional authority. It was his own opinion, never concealed by him, that an amendment of the Constitution was necessary to consummate the effect of his negotiations. The same idea frequently appeared in his correspondence, and even the forms of the amendments to the Constitution proposed by him, to authorize the acquisitions of Louisiana and Florida, were more than once recorded. The

importance of promptly concluding this valuable purchase, or the overruling influence of political friends, seems to have extinguished these constitutional scruples, which were really and earnestly entertained by him. It is the more to be regretted that he who had boasted, "I never had an opinion in politics which I was afraid to own," should not, on this important occasion, and when President of the United States, have required the respect which he himself thought due to the Constitution, to have been observed. It would have given the weight of his great name to an honest precedent, and it might have made impossible the juggling tricks of diplomacy whereby Texas afterwards became annexed to the United States.\*

\* Works, iv. 506. "When I consider that the limits of the United States are precisely fixed by the treaty of 1783, that the Constitution declares itself to be made for the United States, I cannot help believing the intention was not to permit Congress to admit into the Union new States which should be formed out of the Territory for which, and under whose authority alone, they were then acting. I do not believe it was meant they might receive England, Ireland, Holland, &c., into it, which would be the case on your construction. When an instrument admits two constructions, . . . I prefer that which is safe and precise. . . . Our peculiar security is in the possession of a written Constitution." Also see iv. 503, his letter to the Secretary of State, August 25, 1803, in which he proposes the following form of "Amendment to the Constitution necessary in the case of Louisiana:" "Louisiana, as ceded by France to the United States, is made a part of the United States. Its white inhabitants shall be citizens, and stand, as to their rights and obligations, on the

6. He imposed the Embargo in 1807.

This measure also is to be considered the act of Mr. Jefferson, in a particular manner, and was initiated by him in his special message of December 18, 1807.\* England, predominant at sea, had destroyed the French naval power, and to aggravate the French commercial embarrassments to the utmost, had resorted to extreme and odious pretensions, claiming the penalties of blockade against neutral vessels proceeding to or from seaports where no actual blockade was maintained by her. In the end, a contention of Decrees, issued by the Emperor of France, and of Orders in Council, proclaimed by the government of England, had brought things to such a pass that the neutral vessels of the United States could not continue their established commerce in any direction without being subject to capture either by the naval powers and privateers of England or of France. If they made any voyage to England or to English possessions, or allowed themselves to be searched

same footing with other citizens of the United States in analogous situations."

Works, iv. p. 500. August 12, 1803, he wrote to Judge Breckenridge, "The Constitution has made no provision for our holding foreign territory, still less for incorporating foreign nations into our Union. The Executive, in seizing the fugitive occurrence which so much advances the good of their country, have done an act beyond the Constitution."

\* Works, viii. 89.



or visited by any English vessel of war, the Emperor of France claimed the right to capture and confiscate them. If they made any voyage to any part of the Continent of Europe, the whole of which was then under the domination of France, in that case the innumerable cruisers of England intervened, and made what they called lawful prize of American ships. The situation was such that it seemed to force a war upon the country, for which it was by no means prepared, and which it could in no way afford. And, moreover, even had America decided to declare a war, the dilemma was serious, whether it ought to be declared against France or against England. The action of each Government had been towards us equally aggressive in principle and almost equally ruinous in practice. But France had been to us, during the Revolutionary struggles of thirty years before, our staunch and profitable friend, and neither the ill treatment of her more recent Governments, nor the haughty injustice of some of their powerful ministers in promoting the unjust confiscation of our ships, nor the venal corruption of others in holding out their hands to our envoys for secret bribes, could make our country forget how great was our debt of gratitude to France. Yet, on the other part, the temptation was great to uphold the policy of England. By so doing, a very considerable part of our commerce would have been preserved with England,



and we should have enjoyed a considerable share of the English carrying trade. And this was the view taken by the Eastern and Northern States, by leading Federalists, and by all those who had great sympathy with England as the champion of Liberty, and the efficient leader of the combination which she alone could maintain against the enlarging tyranny of Bonaparte. Thus it was, our commerce extended, our vessels captured, both on seas and in port, by authorities both English and French, under pretences which had no support from the law of nations, or any maritime law.

Mr. Jefferson found the solution of all these difficulties in the Embargo, which forbade to American ships and merchants all foreign commerce whatever. Under the circumstances it may be justified as a wise measure of temporary relief and preparation. But the hurried manner in which it was forced upon the country, and the unnecessarily long period of its continuance, until their distresses had nearly compelled the commercial States to rebellion and secession, is not easily to be justified, nor would in any recent times have been considered as otherwise than degrading to our national honor.

On the 10th of November, 1807, the ship *Horizon*, which had been stranded on the French coast by stress of weather, was condemned as a prize by the French courts, because she had English produce on

board, and this decree was upheld and justified by the French Government. The day after, November 11, the Order in Council was passed, by which Great Britain prohibited all trade whatever with France, or with her allies; that is to say, with the whole Continent of Europe. Immediately on receipt of intelligence of these facts, on the 18th of December, 1807, Mr. Jefferson sent to Congress his message recommending the Embargo. The bill was passed though the Senate, with closed doors, after only four hours' debate. It was also forced through the House of Representatives in like manner, though not with equal speed, and became a law on the 22d of December. No notice was given, nor was any opportunity for consultation or explanation afforded to the numerous merchants and ship-owners who were so deeply interested in the measure, and who were thus deprived of their lawful business and property. It seemed as if the despotic and arbitrary Decrees dictated by the French Emperor and by the British Council, were to be imitated by the first President of the United States who was by eminence entitled a "Republican;" with this difference only, that whereas the Decrees of Berlin and Milan, and the British Orders, were aimed as measures of retaliation against enemies, our Embargo was so directed as to invade the rights, oppress the commerce, and destroy the fortunes and subsistence of our own citizens.

Mr. Jefferson's own explanation and justification may be found in several passages of his writings. In his reply to an address of Tammany Society, February 29, 1808,\* less than ten weeks after the passage of the bill: "There can be no question in a mind truly American whether it is best to send our citizens and property into certain captivity, and then wage war for their recovery, or to keep them at home, and to turn seriously to that policy which plants the manufacturer and the husbandman side by side, and establishes at the door of every one that exchange of mutual labors and comforts which we have hitherto sought in distant regions, and under perpetual risk of broils with them." † November 21, of the same year, he writes, "By withdrawing a while from the ocean we have suffered some loss, but we have gathered home our immense capital. . . . We have saved our seamen from the jails of Europe, and gained time to prepare for defence. . . . Submission and tribute, if that be our choice, are no baser now than at the date of the Embargo."

As time went on the Embargo became exceedingly oppressive to all the commercial interests of the country, and they were the less patient of its effects because of the sudden manner in which it had been forced upon them. — And in the winter of 1809, after an interview with John Quincy Adams, which con-

\* Works, viii. 127.

† Works, viii. 140.

vinced him of an extreme dissatisfaction in the Eastern States, bordering upon rebellion, he was obliged to submit to its repeal, which took effect on the 4th of March in that year. As to its repeal, which was carried sorely against his own personal opinion, he writes to General Armstrong, on the 5th of March,\* "After fifteen months' continuance, it is now discontinued, because, losing fifty millions of dollars of exports annually by it, it costs more than war, which might be carried on for a third of that, besides what might be got by reprisal. War, therefore, must follow if the Edicts are not repealed before the meeting of Congress in May." And also to Mr. Short, three days later, he says, "Our Embargo has worked hard. It has, in fact, federalized three of the New England States. We have substituted for it a non-intercourse with France and England and their dependencies, and a trade to all other places. It is probable that the belligerents will take our vessels under their Edicts, in which case we shall probably declare war against them."

On the 4th of March, 1809, the last day of Mr. Jefferson's Presidency, the Embargo ceased to exist. Originally it may have been a measure of reasonable discretion, but it had been protracted so as to have produced great distress to those who were engaged in commerce and in shipping, and through large

\* Works, v. 433.

districts of country it had cooled the friends and heated the enemies of the Democratic party. Mr. Jefferson himself could never have realized the importance of commerce and navigation to his country. In October 13, 1785, he writes to Count Hogendorp,\* "You ask what I think on the expediency of encouraging our States to be commercial. Were I to indulge my own theory, I should wish them to practise neither commerce nor navigation, but to stand, with respect to Europe, precisely on the footing of China. We should thus avoid wars, and all our citizens would be husbandmen." Such ideas he seems to have entertained, at least until the close of his political life; nor does he ever appear to have been convinced until his interview with John Quincy Adams, before alluded to, of the extreme and intolerable pressure with which his Embargo weighed down some of the greatest and most important interests of his country.

Mr. Jefferson's public life was now brought to a close. He had attended the inauguration of his friend, James Madison, his successor in the Presidency, and still a vigorous man of sixty-six years of age. He retired to Monticello about the middle of March, able to accomplish the last three days of his journey there on horseback. Here he resided during the remaining seventeen years of his life.

Mr. Jefferson cannot be reproached with any fond-

\* Works, i. 465.



ness for money, or for any disposition unduly to hoard or to accumulate it. His expenditures were always those of a generous and liberal mind. In his youth, when it could not have been the custom for young men to collect a library, we find that he lost, by the burning of his house at Shadwell, books which cost him about a thousand dollars. Not discouraged by this, during all his active life he had purchased books in literature, science, history, diplomacy, the classics, belles-lettres, such as were important to his mental culture. The hospitalities of his mansion, too, had always been without stint or bound, according to the custom of the country in which he lived, and this the attraction of his distinguished and agreeable social qualities, and of his important political position, had rendered very burdensome to a fortune of an amount which could never have been considered very large, and of a nature which could only have been made to yield any considerable income by a degree of care and attention which he was never in a position to afford. In his public life he had always considered it due to the dignity of his high political positions to apportion his expenses in a liberal manner for hospitality, service, and equipage. And, in fact, during his time, in memory of the aristocratic institutions which had existed, and of the circumstances of forms and dignities with which Washington had recently surrounded himself, it would have hardly



been possible for him to make any savings, either from the allowances of his official employments or from the income of his private fortune.

He returned, then, to Monticello in declining life, with a moderate income, and with great demands upon it. The principal occupations of his remaining years were the education of his grandchildren, who lived with him, the management of his own estates, hospitalities to numerous guests, and, most of all, the writing of replies to the multitude of letters with which he was quite overburdened and almost overwhelmed. Thus for sixteen years he passed his time, for the most part in the daily duties and the daily pleasures of the life of a country gentleman. The order of his life was at times shaded and darkened by serious anxieties as to his pecuniary affairs. These severely pressed upon him during his later years, not so much by reason of his own improvidence, as of failure on the part of friends whom he had trusted. Yet, notwithstanding these things, he still preserved his philosophy and serenity of mind, and made such arrangements as were possible to meet his obligations and to preserve his independence. During the period from 1817 to 1826, he had also found very serious and continued occupation in founding the establishment of the University of Virginia. He had resumed the projects of his youth, which were for the education of all classes of white people. By his

influence, constantly and unremittingly exhibited, the Legislature of his State had made grants, not indeed so large as he demanded, but still in large and liberal measure, for the purposes of Education, generally for the founding of the University of Virginia. The control and superintendence of this establishment in its earlier years, indeed its initiation and foundation, were confided by the State to a Board of Visitors, upon which were glad to serve the most distinguished men of Virginia, with Mr. Jefferson as their Rector and Chief. To Mr. Jefferson it was mainly due that the most able and learned men were induced to serve as Professors in this Institution, and that its Constitution was of the most liberal character.

The year 1826 found him at the crisis of his fortunes and of his life. Eighty-three years old, infirm of body, the vigor of his mind failing, the embarrassments of his pecuniary affairs increasing, and suddenly much aggravated by an unexpected loss of considerable amount, he found himself obliged to consider how he could so dispose of his remaining property as to pay his debts and supply the necessities of living. While he was engaged in proposing such arrangements as occurred to him, and while his private and public friends and the Legislatures of some of the States were occupied in devising measures for the pecuniary relief of one to whom they were so much indebted, worn with age, and with

cares and disorders, he quietly expired, a little after noon, on the 4th of July, 1826; about four hours before the death of his compatriot and friend, John Adams, and just fifty years after himself and the same John Adams had signed that Declaration which, on the 4th of July, 1776, announced to the world the Independence of America.

Mr. Jefferson had intellectual talents greatly superior to the common mass of men, and for the times his opportunities of culture in youth were admirable. It was a special advantage to him to have begun with excellent academic learning in early life, and at college to have felt the quickening influence of an able man like Professor Small, well trained in scholarship, and cherishing a taste for science and literature. Mr. Jefferson early learned the Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, and Italian languages, and showed a fondness for reading and study not common in Virginia, and quite uncommon in any part of America, for a young man who had such independent control of time and means as he had.

All his life he associated, by preference, with able men and educated men. His inherited property enabled him to buy books, which, to the value of one thousand dollars, were burned with his house at Shadwell, when he was twenty-two years old. He could indulge his taste for music. He was not

forced by the humble circumstances of his younger days to print books like Franklin, to survey lands like Washington, or to keep school like Adams. But I cannot think his mind a great one. I cannot point out any name of those times which may stand in the long interval between the names of Franklin and John Adams. In the shorter space between Adams and Jefferson there were many. Some of them in power and force nearly approached, and almost equalled Adams. There was a certain lack of solidity: his intellect was not very profound, not very comprehensive. Intelligent, able, adroit as he was, his success as an intellectual man was far from being entire or complete. He exhibited no spark of genius, nor any remarkable degree of original natural talent.

His strength lay in his understanding the practical power. He learned affairs quickly. He remembered well. He was fond of details in all things. He kept a Diary, in which he noted systematically all sorts of facts. He was a nice observer of Nature, and as well as his opportunities permitted he cultivated the sciences of Botany, Zoölogy, Geology.

Ardent in his feelings, quick in his apprehension, and rapid in his conclusions, his judgment does not appear to have been altogether sound and reliable.

As to his imagination, he seems to have had less than the average of educated men; and though fond

of beauty and simplicity in all forms, there yet seemed to be little of the creative power of poetry in him. In his youth he loved to read poetry, but in his old age he laid it aside for the most part, retaining only his fondness for Homer, Hesiod, Sophocles, Euripides, and the Greek and Latin classics generally. In answer to a letter making inquiries as to a proper course of education for females, he writes, in 1818, "Too much poetry should not be indulged. Homer is useful for forming style and taste. Pope, Dryden, Thomson, and Shakspeare, and of the French, Molière, Racine, the Corneilles, may be read with pleasure and improvement."

In literature he disliked fiction generally. Don Quixote was a favorite in his youth; so were a few pastoral and lyric writers; but he never learned to admire Byron, Campbell, Southey, or Coleridge. Yet I find no American, during the Revolutionary period, whose intellectual life was so marked with good taste and æsthetic culture. His was a fine nature finely educated. He hated all coarseness, and in that respect was as modest as a maiden, any indelicacy in his presence causing him to blush even in old age.

He had not great power of reason. In matters of science he was rather a dabbler than a philosopher, yet he had considerable love for science. He knew something of mathematics, and read thoughtful books.



He disliked ethics and metaphysics, and had no talent for either. He had no understanding of abstract and universal truth. He thought Plato a writer of nonsense, speaks of the "whimseys, the puerilities, and unintelligible jargon" of Plato's Republic, and says he often asked himself how the world could have so long consented to give reputation to such nonsense.\*

As an inventor he had some pretensions. But he was an inventor, not of new ideas, but of forms only. He had great skill in organizing ideas into institutions, and in influencing and marshalling men into parties.

His administrative powers were neither great nor good. Though he always gave a certain degree of attention to his private affairs, yet they were never well managed. His own property and that brought him by his wife, would have seemed sufficient to maintain an honorable independence; and yet this estate, notwithstanding its large receipts from official salaries for many years, seems to have been constantly diminishing, as well during his absence from home as after his return to it. So, too, his capacity for administration, both as Governor of Virginia and as President of the United States, can by no means be considered eminent. His conduct of the affairs of Virginia during the British invasion, when a

\* Tucker, ii. 356.



British army of fifteen hundred strong held his State for months, however difficult may have been the circumstances, by no means adds to his reputation. In the Presidency, it is now quite certain that his administrative ideas respecting the Army and the Military Academy, the Navy and the Gunboats, and the continuance of the Embargo, as an honorable measure less oppressive and more economical than war, were all great mistakes to have been made by the Head of the Government at that time.

Let us now consider his moral character.

He had a good deal of moral courage, though this was somewhat limited by his sensitiveness to public opinion.\* He had not great physical courage, else the charge against him as Governor of Virginia could never have been made, and would have been more decisively repelled. His natural delicacy of nature gave him quick intuitions and rapid perceptions of the Right. These induced him even to avoid the theatre, to hate drunkenness, though he was by no means an ascetic, and to shun tobacco, swearing, gaming, and all indecency. But I think the charge that he was father of some of his own slaves is but too well founded. There is no instance of his having been engaged in any duel. His faults were vices of calculation, and not of passion. He was quick-

\* Works, iv. 444; Randall, ii. 183.

tempered, earnest, and excitable, but at the same time he was free and outspoken, good-humored, and cheerful. Always hopeful, he for a long time thought the war of 1812 not likely to take place; and after 1816 was quite sanguine that he could redeem his own private fortunes by successes in farming. In his earlier years he was confident that the American Revolution would turn out well; and in his later life thought he should live to see the Virginia University attract five hundred or a thousand students. He was not vindictive. It is true he was not tolerant to Ideas, but he was tolerant to persons. He never made a political division into a personal difference.\* He was not always quite sincere. He made great professions of love and respect to Washington, while he, at the same time, sustained Freneau and Callender, Washington's vilest and most unscrupulous libellers. In the matters also of Thomas Paine's pamphlet, and of his having given Mr. Paine a passage to America in a public ship, his desire for popularity seems to have betrayed him into making undue apologies. The affair of his letter to Mazzei, which came to the public knowledge, and at which Washington was justly offended, affords another instance of explanations, which could not have been quite sincere.† He sometimes used harsh language.

\* Randall, iii. 636.

† Jefferson's expression in the Mazzei letter, of "Samsons in the

He calls Marshall's *Life of Washington* "a five-volumed libel" on the Democracy. *Hamilton's Life* is to be written by one "who to the bitterness of the President adds the rancor of the fiercest Federalism." It seems of him, as of Franklin, that he had lived in a bad moral atmosphere,\* though born with a good and exact moral nature. He was of an earnest character, though he did not always seem to be so. He was not reverential of great men, and his temper was quite emancipated from the authority of great names. He had great powers of pleasing all that were about him, or that came near to him. He was never quarrelsome, or inclined to dispute. "Never had an enemy in Congress," says Mr. Randall. He had many friends, and he kept their friendships, and always addressed himself to conduct

field and Solomons in council," must have referred to Washington. At the time of publication Jefferson wrote Madison, August 3, that he could not avow the Mazzei letter "without a personal difference between General Washington and myself, which nothing before the publication of this letter had ever done. It would embroil me also with all those with whom his character is still popular; that is to say, with nine tenths of the people of the United States." Hildreth, v. p. 55.

"Mr. Jefferson was a consummate politician whenever he deemed a resort to policy expedient and allowable, and few men then had more penetration in fathoming the purposes of others or in concealing his own." Tucker.

\* "L'accent du pays où l'on est ne demeure dans l'esprit et dans le cœur, comme dans le langage."

affairs in the smoothest and pleasantest manner. His perfectly good temper consistently manifested itself in every way. He was fond of young children. All the members of his family and his household were exceedingly attached to him. And his letters to his daughters and grandchildren, and even to Mr. and Mrs. Adams, exhibit his affectionate nature. Yet he was not a loving man, like Franklin or Madison; rather he had great love of approbation, and great fear of censure, together with a mild, amiable, affectionate temper.

Of Mr. Jefferson's relation to Slavery we have already seen something. His family biographer, Mr. Randall, sums up the whole by saying, "He was wholly opposed to Slavery on *all* grounds, and desired its abolition."\* And, indeed, it is true that not many Republicans of the present day have principles more decided, or more thoroughly considered, as to the abstract right of the negro to freedom, than were uttered and written by Mr. Jefferson, from his earliest to his latest year. At his first entrance into the Legislature of Virginia, he attempted, but failed, to carry a bill giving to owners the right to free their slaves. Soon afterwards he writes, that "the Rights of human nature are deeply wounded by this practice" [Slave Trade]. On many occasions he suggested the abolition of Slavery in Virginia, by an act

\* Randall, iii. 667.

providing for the freedom of all the children of slaves born after a certain day. The provision which he proposed, excluding Slavery from all the Territory of the United States north of the thirty-first parallel of latitude, has already been cited. In his annual message to Congress, December 2, 1806, he declares, "I congratulate you, fellow-citizens, on the approach of the period at which you may constitutionally interpose your authority to withdraw the citizens of the United States from all further participation in those violations of human rights which have been so long continued on the unoffending inhabitants of Africa." And in a letter written only seven weeks before his death (dated May 20, 1826), he says, "My sentiments [on the subject of Slavery] have been forty years before the public. . . . Although I shall not live to see them consummated, they will not die with me; but, living or dying, they will always be in my most fervent prayer."

In 1781, Tarleton, in his raid through Virginia, captured Monticello, compelled Mr. Jefferson to fly, committed much waste upon his property, and carried off about thirty of his slaves. Seven years later, at Paris, Mr. Jefferson, writing to Dr. Gordon, says, as to the carrying off of his slaves, "had this been to give them freedom he [Tarleton] would have done right." \*

\* Works, ii. 426.



There is no distinguished writer of his time from whom the Abolitionists can more effectively quote. "You know that no one wishes more ardently to see an abolition, not only of the trade, but of the condition of slavery." He earnestly desires "to see a good system commenced for raising the condition both of their [the negroes] body and mind to what it ought to be." And he believed the race capable of improvement and enlightenment, and very possibly of self-government.

"What an incomprehensible machine is man! who can endure toil, famine, stripes, imprisonment, and death itself, in vindication of his own liberty, and the next moment be deaf to all those motives whose power supported him through his trial, and inflict on his fellow-man a bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that which he rose in rebellion to oppose. But we must wait with patience the workings of an overruling Providence. I hope that that is preparing deliverance of these our suffering brethren. When the measure of their tears shall be full, when their groans shall have involved heaven itself in darkness, doubtless a God of Justice will awaken to their distress, and by diffusing light and liberality among their oppressors, or, at length, by His exterminating thunder manifest His attention to the things of this world, and [show] that they are not left to the guidance of a blind fatality." And



what can be more graphic than the often-cited passage from his Works, on Virginia, respecting slavery. "The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to the worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. . . . Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just. . . . The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest." \*

Some person asked Mr. Jefferson "whether he had made any change in his religion." He replied, "Say nothing of my religion. It is known to my God and myself alone. Its evidence before the world is to be sought in my life; if that has been honest and dutiful to society, the religion which has regulated it cannot be a bad one." † We have seen that Mr. Jefferson was a profound and independent thinker; he called no man master, and among the various sectarians of his day, who would not allow the name of Christian to each other, it cannot be expected that it should have been commonly allowed to him. Yet surely there was a certain piety, and some depth of religious feeling in the man. The book most frequently chosen for reading before he went to bed was a collection of extracts from the Bible. In

\* Works, viii. 403, 404.

† Works, vii. 55.

1803, when President of the United States, and overwhelmed with business, he extracted from the New Testament such passages as he believed to have come from the lips of Jesus Christ, and arranged them in a small volume. Of this he says, "A more beautiful or more precious morsel of ethics I have never seen. It is a document in proof that I am a real Christian; that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus; very different from the Platonists, who call me Infidel and themselves Christians and teachers of the Gospel, while they draw all their characteristic dogmas from what its Author never said or saw."

He said of himself that he had never meditated a specific creed; and this is confirmed by what he in another place refers to as his religious creed on paper, which was contained in a writing to Dr. Benjamin Rush, dated April 21, 1803.\* It was not the statement of any creed, but a very general criticism of the progress of mankind. He well knew that his religious ideas were unpopular, and probably considered them, however suitable to his own intellectual power and independence, not necessarily to be adopted by others. Therefore, though he wrote to his daughter, Mrs. Randolph, saying, "I have placed my religious creed on paper, that my family should be enabled to estimate the libels published against

\* Works, iv. 479.

me on this subject," yet he never made any attack on the religious faith of any sect, nor ever attempted to make any proselyte to his own. He never communicated his religious belief to more than half a dozen persons. His oldest grandson writes, "Of his peculiar religious views his family know no more than the world." He said, "It was a subject each was religiously bound to study assiduously for himself, unbiassed by the opinions of others. It was a matter solely of conscience. After thorough investigation, they were responsible for the righteousness, but not for the rightfulness, of their opinions. That the expression of his opinion might influence theirs, and that therefore he would not give it." \*

An anecdote is told of his once passing the evening at Ford's Tavern, as he was travelling in the interior of Virginia, with a clergyman who had no acquaintance with him. While the topic of conversation was mechanical, the stranger thought him to be an engineer; when agricultural, he believed him to be a farmer; but when the topic of religion was broached, the clergyman considered that his companion must be another clergyman, though without making up his mind of what particular persuasion. Afterwards the clergyman inquired of the landlord the name of his fellow-guest. "What! don't you know the Squire? That was Mr. Jefferson," was the

\* Randall, iii. 561.

reply. "Not President Jefferson!" "Yes, President Jefferson!" "Why!" exclaimed the clergyman, "I tell you that was neither an atheist nor an irreligious man. One of juster sentiments I never met with."\* And so it is; if we would form an opinion as to his religion (and would it not be well in the case of others as well as of himself?), we must seek its evidence in his life. If that was honest and beautiful to society, the religion which regulated it cannot have been a bad one.

Of all those who controlled the helm of affairs during the time of the Revolution, and while the Constitution and the forms of our National and State Institutions were carefully organized, there is none who has been more generally popular, more commonly beloved, more usually believed to be necessary to the Legislation and Administration of his country, than Thomas Jefferson. It may not be said of him that of all those famous men he could least have been spared; for in the rare and great qualities for patiently and wisely conducting the vast affairs of State and Nation in pressing emergencies, he seems to have been wanting. But his grand merit was this — that while his powerful opponents favored a strong government, and believed it necessary thereby to repress what they called the lower classes, he, Jef-

\* Randall, *iii.* 345.

ferson, believed in Humanity; believed in a true Democracy. He respected labor and education, and upheld the right to education of all men. These were the Ideas in which he was far in advance of all the considerable men, whether of his State or of his Nation — ideas which he illustrated through long years of his life and conduct. The great debt that the Nation owes to him is this — that he so ably and consistently advocated these needful opinions, that he made himself the head and the hand of the great party that carried these ideas into power, that put an end to all possibility of class government, made naturalization easy, extended the suffrage and applied it to judicial office, opened a still wider and better education to all, and quietly inaugurated reforms, yet incomplete, of which we have the benefit to this day, and which, but for him, we might not have won against the party of Strong Government, except by a difficult and painful Revolution.





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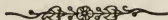
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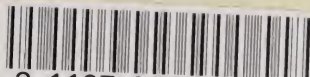












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